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TO

HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

FARNBOROUGH HALL.

FARNBOROUGH HALL.

CHAPTER I.

No Englishman ever quitted a farm of one thousand acres with a more full determination to say good-bye to agricultural pursuits than I did. I had been farming without making any headway for many years, but the last three years had completely paralysed all efforts to make sufficient money to pay the rent, tithe, and taxes—to say nothing about housekeeping expenses. It is true, that in consequence of the importation of corn, cattle, implements, etc., combined with the extensive advantages which offer themselves

for the cultivation of large tracts of maiden soil in foreign parts, we were gradually drifting towards a great crisis; but that period has been hastened quite ten years by a series of disasters which have been heaped on the British farmer during the three past successive years; and now the complete deluge of unseasonable rain has crowned our misfortunes, and arrested our steady march, by bringing us suddenly to the brink of ruin.

The first year of excessive rainfall was a "sloven's year," for the corn on the poor starved land outgrew the weeds and triumphed over the fallen rotten crop on the rich land; and many a needy farmer smiled at the market table as he contemplated harvesting his crop and paying his debts; but alas! the sun refused to shine on rich or poor, and the English miller refused to

look at the damp inferior samples of home-grown grain—buying only what he could mix with foreign corn from his best customers and men who least needed his patronage. I calculate, that during those three years, I sold barely sufficient produce to pay the working expenses of my farm; that I paid rent, tithe, and rates from tenant-farmers' capital; and when my landlord returned me ten per cent. the last year, and suggested, that, as my lease had expired, I should hold my farm at a reduction of twenty per cent. for the following year, I positively refused to have anything more to do with it. My farm sale, too, was a failure; for, although I provided a substantial luncheon, hoping to put a little life into the buyers, barely one hundred people attended the sale—for who indeed wanted to buy farming implements or stock

at such a time of depression!—and those who did attend, formed themselves into dealers' "knock out" parties according to their trade, and many of the things were actually given away. To give you an idea of what they realised, I may mention that a good reaping machine was sold for twenty-five shillings, and a very useful two-year-old bull for ten pounds. That bull was sold to a butcher the following market-day for eighteen pounds, and the "knock out" men divided the profit.

In the end I lost fully one-half of my capital, and that after thirty years of steady industry as an "English farmer." It is true that myself and family had lived a somewhat comfortable life. We had educated our four children well, always kept two, and sometimes three, domestic servants, and visited with people

who in my father's time were considered to rank higher than the tenant-farmer; but the growth of "education" had forced these things upon us. We considered we were obliged to maintain our position, and the maintenance of it has been very expensive, because farmers, living as they do in out-of-the-way country places, have to send their children to boarding-schools, and unless they are sent to good schools they will not acquire so good an education as their labourers' children whom the law now compels them to instruct. Our School Board rate was one shilling in the pound.

"Ah! Hope," said the Squire, when he called upon us a few days before we left the farm, "I think you are doing wrong by leaving me. Depend upon it we shall have better seasons; you might economise

and use more machinery and drain more land; I will find you the pipes. Remember the twenty per cent. I offer."

"Sir," I replied, "I think I have been drained pretty well; and so far as the ten per cent. you allowed your tenants last year, it did not meet the case at all. Of course it was kind of you to return it, but three more such years would take the whole of my capital; and as regards economising, I very much fear that the landlord will have to set the example to the tenant. Depend upon it, sir, we have been trying to keep pace with those who own the trade of the country, and whilst their interest has been advanced at the expense of the agriculturist, ours has been dormant for the want of representation in the House of Commons. Cheap bread, cheap education, and a heavy poor-rate for the factory hands,

and a country mansion and heavy rent-roll for the millionaire, may be a handsome thing for the welfare of the country; but it has left a sorry pittance for the tenant-farmers of England."

"But," said the Squire, "I am only getting two per cent. on my capital when the rent is fully paid up; surely you do not call that exorbitant."

"Sir," I replied, "may I ask what was the amount you paid for the estate, and how it compares with the amount for which this same estate was sold fifty years since?"

"I believe," said the Squire, "that I only paid the market value."

"Very true, sir; but I must ask you to add the word 'then,' and to say the 'then' market value, bearing in mind, that, with the present prospect of foreign competition, and our remaining the slaves to the advance-

ment of the trade of the country—if we are to find money to drain and improve entailed estates, to pay a carpenter to repair the property (the landlord finding only rough timber), to trench and remake rod eyots, to grow hedgerow timber for the landlord, keep the roads in repair for the public, pay by far the largest proportion of the poor-rate, educate children for the railways and trade of the country, preserve game, and return you gentlemen to Parliament for your amusement—I think I may say that you may fairly be asked to do as I have done on your estate, viz., 'Sink the half of your capital.'"

"I fail to understand you," said the Squire.

"Then, sir, I will explain myself. I happen to know the amount for which this estate was sold fifty years since, and I know

the amount you gave for it. There was at the time a great demand for land. Your friends were commercial people, and there was an attempt on the part of your neighbours, who consider they belong to the aristocracy of the county, to outbid you in the matter, resulting as it did in your giving the price for it and raising your rents. You may not have benefited financially by the transaction, but you must admit that the possession of such a landed estate as this is a passport to society. We have returned you as M.P. You are a magistrate. The living is in your gift, and I am sure the shooting is excellent. Pray pardon me, sir, for saying that latterly all this has been at the expense of the tenant-farmer, and that three more such years would assuredly select me as a candidate for the workhouse, to which institution, although I have been the

largest subscriber, I should only be admitted as a common pauper, side by side with my cowherd."

"I will wish you good-day," said the Squire. "I certainly don't agree with you."

* * * * *

The Squire could not let my farm. In fact, he very soon had ten farms thrown on his hands, good and bad alike, for the excessive rainfall had completely washed all condition out of the land, and no one would take them. The few tenants he has left are in a very awkward position, I know; for if they attempt to leave, the Squire will claim everything for rent, and, being, to my knowledge, devoid of capital, I don't know how they will manage to hold on hoping for better times. But there they are, and the Squire knows they can't pay. He also knows that if he turns them out he will not

be able to get other tenants, for he can't let his best farms. Besides, he has already had a taste of farming his own estate, and the butler told me the other day, that when the land-steward comes to the mansion for cheques, the Squire is like a madman. How these little farmers are going to get out of their trouble no one knows. For my part, I think a good workman is far more independent in this country than a small farmer who is indebted to his landlord, and who slaves about from sunrise to sunset and makes no progress.

We moved into the town, and I awoke a free man, to consider what next should be done to employ time and capital. My wife and two daughters, Fanny and Laura, were charmed with the novelty of the situation. David, our youngest son, who was finishing his apprenticeship with a

carpenter and builder, was able to give up his lodgings and to come and reside with us. He was so pleased, poor boy! and George, whose time had expired at the Iron Works, offered his services to his employers. Much to his disappointment they were unable to find him employment, owing, they said, to agricultural distress; so it had found its way to them, for George said that scarcely any new orders came in, and very few repairs. He was determined to do something, and, much to his mother's annoyance, but to my delight, the lad engaged himself to a farrier and veterinary surgeon to get an insight into the business. Nothing pleases that lad so much as the task to conquer a restive horse, and how can I wonder at it! for I recollect when I was his age, I had just the same pleasure in riding some brute

that I wouldn't mount for all the world now, and the excitement of barely escaping with my life a time or two made me relish it all the more in those days.

My daughters made a complete tour, visiting their town friends and then asking them in return. Indeed they had but little else to occupy their time.

At first I found it most amusing to inspect the factories aud attend the neighbouring markets, usually finishing the day with a call in at the smoke-room of the chief hotel, just to hear the news and the gossip of the day. But as the time wore on "travels about home" became monotonous, for I had no interest in the factories; my presence, too, in markets was not as welcome as of yore. Traders and dealers had discovered that I was out of business, and they preferred cracking a joke with

someone who was, or who was likely to become, a customer for their corn or cattle. Indeed, latterly my remarks as to the quality or the value of an article were not always acceptable; and I was once reminded of this by one dealer calling to another in a loud tone for me to hear: "No one's such a nuisance in a market as a retired butcher or a broken-down farmer."

The girls, too, grew tired of pleasure-seeking, and soon discovered, that, however pleased their town friends had been to come and stay with them at the farm, they needed as little as possible of their return visit at their houses of business.

No sooner had the sun begun to shine on both sides of the hedges, than I began to pine for Nature's old haunts in the country. The winter is all very well in a town, but the summer

to one who has never lived in a town is intolerable. I determined to make a move of some kind, and talked it over with my wife accordingly—for I could see that my income would not support an artificial existence of the kind; besides, there were the four young people to get out in the world. My health was good and so was my wife's, and although we did not need his assistance professionally, we invited our late doctor to tea, and asked his opinion on the subject. "My dear fellow," said he, "emigrate, emigrate, emigrate. I will call on a friend I know and bring you all the papers." Other friends suggested various things. One a public-house for the daughters to appear at the bar; another a coal business, that I might be missionary to the blacks; and I might have been a director of several concerns, but for my

lack of faith in allowing others to direct the distribution of my capital. The doctor brought no end of papers as to emigration, and we amused ourselves by looking over them. Some of the schemes were most promising. There was maiden land which could be ploughed into furrows a mile in length without interruption, and a yard deep in productive loam. Shooting of all kinds, from the prairie hen to the wild peafowl, and dingoes to hunt instead of foxes. But then, who would there be to hunt them, and is not the pleasure of the chase in proportion to the surrounding circumstances? How about a few dashing young officers to show us the way? Who is going to be master of the hounds, and where do we call for a glass of cherry-brandy or a tankard of good ale? I am afraid we should be obliged to trap the

dingoes and devote our time to ring-barking and burning the timber. Lively amusement that for an old English farmer! He would scarcely get so dirty if an engine-driver in England. Then, as regards the shooting: once stripped of its rivalry, its raillery, and its rarity . . . I fear I should grow tired of cooking prairie hens, if I was debarred of the companionship of my old friends.

The boys, on the other hand, pictured a land of freedom and future promise. "Depend upon it," said they, "it's all up with Old England. It will cost us one shilling and one penny to produce one shilling. Let us go abroad." We were discussing the merits and demerits of the case when who should drop in but our old friend, Dick Lawrence—"Rackety Dick" we always called him—home from

Australia, whither his father had sent him some ten years since. He saw the emigration papers on the table and looked them over.

"This is a good 'get up,'" said he, as he came upon the one which described Australian life in the most glowing terms. "Fourteen miles from a road, ten miles from a church, twelve from a doctor, every bit of pasture dried up, and the cattle nearly all starved. Nothing lives there but the kangaroo. Several families have come out, but they have all left it."

"Then," said I, "how do these people dare to hold out such a false representation?"

"Oh!" he replied, "it's all fair, only a little highly-coloured; it's an emigration scheme. They want to sell the land at a profit, and to get a commission on your

passage-money. If you don't care to take up the settlement, that's your look-out. There's no law to touch them, and once you step across the little ditch it's not very likely you will trouble them. Now look here, Mr. Mark Hope, if you want the opinion of a man who has been out as to the value of emigration to an English farmer, you are welcome to my experience, and then you can please yourselves after all. Remember that my interest would be to get you out alongside of me, for I have made my home there, and there I must stick, unless I can sell out to advantage. If I could sell out, it wouldn't be long before I was back in Old England, for never during the remembrance of man were such exceptional advantages offered to the English tenant-farmer. Why, I find the best old farms

going a-begging for a tenant, and the landlords ready to accept tenants on their own terms. There seems to be nobody in England with the money and the knowledge who is available as a tenant-farmer, and if you don't look out you will have the Chinese or the Dutch coming over here to teach you gentlemen how to farm at a profit. See what a selection you have of farms; you have the Ground Game Bill passed, and the whole subject of Land Tenure is being brought to the fore by Irish agitation. Now those are the people who *ought* to emigrate. What is the good of Parnell and Co. telling them that it is any longer possible for them to exist on the cultivation of a few miserable acres of land, producing barely sufficient for their own consumption, and with the small surplus which they have for sale, coming

into competition with all the larger corn-growing factories of America, where everything is done on a gigantic scale? Why, if the land belonged to them they couldn't live respectably on it. No; they are the people to emigrate. You and your family could not live comfortably in a log hut, and sleep on the floor and be as happy as the day is long, with your pigs next door and your fowls overhead, but they can; and if they would only go and get mixed up with other settlers it would be the finest check to Fenianism that ever happened. The Irish are a warm-hearted race of people, but they see no distant acquaintanceship with a neighbour—you must be either a pal of an Irishman or his enemy; and as to loyalty—why I believe that if the Queen was to go amongst them, 'the devil a bit would anyone

harm a hair of her head;' and they would dance the Scotch out of their kilts if they only had the same opportunity. In your case, Mr. Hope, just fancy dragging these two young ladies into a wild country, next farm, perhaps, to settlers of the description aforesaid. No morning paper there, you must remember, and no weekly market. If you want a servant you will have to treat her as one of yourselves, and most likely have to put up with two black ones as we do. I have seen lots of families come out who never soiled their hands in this country and there descend to do the most menial work. Depend upon it, it is *pride—false* pride, I call it—which takes the English tenant-farmer from home; and, once out, he is unable to regain his social status, and he remains with the positive knowledge

of self-sacrifice, but with the hope of making headway for his family, who, being brought up in the rough way necessitated by their isolated position, will one day be about such farmers as our grandfathers were in their youth. Now, do you see much progress or much sense in that, Mr. Hope?"

"Dick," said I, "I'm delighted that you stepped in now, for the young ones can hear for themselves. It will, I know, be impossible for me to take a farm and endeavour to maintain the class of home I formerly provided for them; and if we do have another venture in this country —for I am tired of an idle life—I tell them that we must all pull together, and endeavour to combine the habits of our grandfathers with the improvements of the age."

"The very thing," said Dick. "Now

you have hit the right nail on the head. It is your expensive habits that recoil on the heads of you Englishmen. Why, if you will only submit to half of the inconvenience that you would willingly encounter abroad, you can, I am sure, do better in England as things are now, and retain all the advantages of perfect civilisation. You would have to take leave of that beautiful instrument," remarked Mr. Lawrence to my daughter Laura, after she had favoured us with a new operatic piece on the piano, "supposing you went to Australia. Even the birds don't sing there, although they are very handsomely feathered."

"Then I won't go there," said Laura, "for I should miss my piano."

Altogether we spent a very pleasant evening, greatly amused by Dick Lawrence's tales of his adventures. He was

a smart, beardless youth when he first left England, but now he was a bearded veteran, refusing to conform to our English collar-wearing custom. I think a collar is a garment indispensable to completion of attire.

We were very thankful to have his opinion, particularly as one by one he explained away the advantages which appeared in the emigration papers. I fully determined to take his advice and to try my luck again as a farmer in the old country.

Farm after farm I inspected. Agent after agent I interviewed. There was one good old-fashioned farm I had a mind to take, but there was too much ploughed stiff land to it, and I am very doubtful as to the tillage of farms conducted exclusively for corn-growing in England, where that tillage is expensive and difficult

to conduct by reason of heavy draught and inability to deal with it independently of ordinary weather.

At last I came upon the farm I preferred to all others. It consisted of five hundred acres of mixed land, a good homestead and house, a labourer's cottage, with stable, yard, and barn, forming a second homestead on the upper part of the farm. There was nothing on the farm but a few straw ricks, and the mice and rats had been running about with tears in their eyes, hoping that an inhabitant would come to their rescue. After going carefully over every field and booking the name of it and the acreage, I sought an old labourer who had worked on the farm. I was directed to a small thatched cottage where lived one John Brown, an old labourer upwards of seventy years of age.

His back was bent, and he turned his left foot out, the effect of following a plough for fifty years—why not make plough handles movable, so that they may suit men of various heights? How many old ploughmen are walking double in consequence of this stooping sequence of the plough; their left foot they usually propel on the level, whilst the right foot follows in the furrow on lower ground. In course of time this gives an unnatural gait to a ploughman which cannot well be avoided; but the matter of plough handles might easily be corrected in the manufacture.

I commenced my introduction by tendering the old man five shillings for his information. He at first refused to accept it, telling me that I was welcome to anything he could tell me; but on my ex-

plaining that a solicitor would charge me six shillings and eightpence for one simple question, and telling him that I wished to stay some time and ask many questions about Farnborough Hall—the name of the farm in question—he pocketed the five shillings and bade me be seated. No further restraint then appeared on his part, and having promised to find the old man an easy job on the farm should I take it, he told me more about the nature of the soil, the crops that suited the land, and the peculiarities of the fields, than I should have found out unaided in two years. Here we have an example of the loss sustained by English farmers refusing to read agricultural works or to benefit by the knowledge of their predecessors.

Such a book as would convey an immense amount of practical knowledge

is Caird's "English Agriculture,"* published in 1850 and 1851, and containing a detailed report of practical farming in various counties under various terms of tenure and circumstances. If this poor old man could, by his experience as a labourer on this farm, enable me to judge of the value and the capabilities of the land on which he had laboured throughout his life, how much more valuable are the observations of learned men of discernment, collected without prejudice for the information of men who refuse to be taught!

The time has now arrived that the English farmer must study, contrive, and exert his wits to keep the intelligent foreigner from laying waste the land of

* I purchased a copy of this work at a second-hand bookstall in 1881; and although it had been published thirty years, and had apparently changed hands many times, a number of the leaves were uncut.

England, as a reproach to the hitherto industrious character of its inhabitants.

The interview with this aged labourer enabled me to form a correct estimate of the value of the land. I came to the conclusion that a certain portion of the arable land would no longer pay to be ploughed, that it must be thrown down to pasture; that certain fields must be redrained; that certain ditches, both formed and filled in within the memory of John Brown, must be reopened; that a breeding flock was necessary as a mainstay to the farm, and that certain fields were capable of growing anything under proper treatment. The late tenant, he told me, had died somewhat suddenly, and everything but the household furniture had been sold at the sale. It was too late to see the landowner that day, so I returned to report to my family as to my

favourable opinion of Farnborough Hall and its surroundings. I found friends at home, Dick Lawrence and a young friend of his whom he introduced as Mr. Lionel Douglas Aldridge, quite a smart young man in his way, who was delighted to hear that I had been to look at Farnborough Hall, "for," said he, "we live at the adjoining farm, and shall be glad to have you as neighbours. I am sure the young ladies will be quite an acquisition in that neighbourhood. I do hope you will take it. The landlord, Sir Hugh Power, is quite a young gentleman. He is very anxious to let the farm, and you will be able to make easy terms with him; but he won't give up the shooting, and he wants an especial clause about the hares and rabbits." From this young gentleman I elicited much that was useful to me as an applicant for the farm, and,

banker's reference in hand, I presented myself before Sir Hugh Power, the owner of Farnborough Hall.

"I am satisfied as to your references, Mr. Hope," said Sir Hugh, "and now to business. I have always received thirty shillings per acre for the land, tithe free —will you take it at that price? I will do anything in reason as to repairs, etc."

"Certainly not, Sir Hugh. I have been hesitating as to taking another farm at all in England. My friends recommend emigration, but I think it just possible that if you will accede to my terms there is a living to be made at Farnborough Hall. I have looked over a dozen farms already, but I am not over anxious to take one unless I can see a chance of living. I have two sons and two daughters who are willing to join us in the venture,

but we must see our way pretty clearly before we decide on anything."

"What are your terms, Mr. Hope?"

"I should want your farm rent-free for twelve months, as the greater part of it is full of weeds; and then, after that period, I should want security for the return of my capital—the greater part of which I should expend during the first year in the attempt to reclaim the land for cultivation."

"State the security you require, Mr. Hope," said Sir Hugh.

"Well, Sir Hugh, I do not wish to put you to unnecessary expense; but, of course, I shall keep an engine, and I must have a building to contain the machinery I require, viz., a chaff-cutting machine adjoining a barn, machines to pulp roots, split beans, grind oilcake, bruise

oats, saw wood, and, if necessary, to make flour. Farming is not so prosperous now that we can afford to worship a local miller. I must grind bones to make genuine bone manure, after dissolving the bones, and I purpose having a traction-engine with two trucks to enable my son to take corn to the town or to the station, and bring home coal, chalk, or manure. I purpose paying for the trucks, the engine, and the corn-thrashing machine, they being portable; but I want you to provide the fixed machinery, and I am willing to pay a percentage on the outlay in addition to the rent we agree on."

"I have no objection," said the Squire, "to do this, or to make any other reasonable necessary addition to the farm. In fact, it may be done under your own direction, subject, of course, to my approval,

and charged to the estate account. The premises are otherwise in good repair, and the Hall is by far the most commodious old-fashioned farmhouse on my estate; but what about the rent?"

"I beg to offer you one pound per acre, Sir Hugh, taking it on a seven years' lease with permission to renew, and all restrictions as to cropping to be removed."

"Too little, too little," said Sir Hugh, "and I must have the usual lease drawn up and signed."

"Sir Hugh," I replied, "your farm is now beggared out, and I presume the usual lease was signed by the late tenant. Why seek to tie my hands? Surely I know best what I can grow and what I can sell. What, indeed, do these lawyers and agents who draw leases know about farming land? Sometimes hay sells better

than corn; sometimes it pays a farmer to enrich his meadow-land, and to feed his cattle with the corn, if the corn is inferior, and meat is making a good price; he would then in all probability have a good crop of hay, and if he is not allowed to sell it, where is his rent to come from? I am not a man to stint the land, for I have long since discovered that it is impossible to cheat Nature. If I can buy bones and sell hay to advantage, I must be at liberty to do so. You may, if you like, restrict me to keeping a certain head of cattle on the farm, but the usual nonsensical lease—as to cropping land in accordance with lawyers' notions and not selling this and that—I positively refuse to sign. My notion of farming is to rear as much stock as you can—sheep, pigs, calves, and colts, and to feed them well

from their birth; you will then have a plentiful supply of manure for the land, and experience will direct the man of practice where to supply chalk, bones, and other artificial dressing with advantage. To begin with, I feel sure that there is not one field on the farm capable of producing a root crop without artificial assistance, and see how alteration in the malt tax has upset the price of barley, and therefore the four-field system of agriculture to which I presume you would fix me. Beer will be made from all kinds of foreign produce, such as rice and Indian corn, and it has already made a difference of quite seven shillings a quarter in the value of malting barley. No, Sir Hugh, you must trust me, and I will trust you. It is certain that with the present condition of your land it is impossible for me to

rob your estate of its virtue, and if I could not set to work and put some steam into the earth there would be no chance of my getting a living."

"There is a great deal of truth in what you say, Mr. Hope. Say twenty-two shillings and sixpence, and I will give way, subject, as you say, to the head of cattle being maintained on the farm."

"Not one penny more, Sir Hugh; and there are two fields which require draining. I must ask you to drain them free of expense to myself."

"Really, Mr. Hope, if you continue talking like this I might as well cease to be the owner. You must know that I have not long succeeded to this estate. It was somewhat involved, but I have sold my father's town-house and come to live among my tenantry, hoping to make

things comfortable and to study their interest. I am going to provide two engines and a steam-plough for their especial use, and many other things; and in your case I shall not only receive no rent for two years, but you are wanting money outlaid. However, I will give way, conditionally that you forego the power the Legislature has given you over the ground-game, and that I have the whole of the shooting. There are some woods on your proposed farm where I get the best of my shooting, and life in the country without good sport would be quite unbearable to me, I can assure you. My home-farm and the game will be my chief amusements, and my income, thanks to bad seasons and agricultural distress, is already immensely curtailed."

"But, Sir Hugh, surely the landed

proprietors of England will now set to work to improve their position, and thus restore the land to its value. I presume you will not rest until the tithe is redeemed, the law of entail modified, the highway rate amended, the School Board restrictions moderated, and the malt duty restored. I think it is to these sources that the landowners must look for a restitution of their revenue, and I feel sure that the poor man is not benefited by the removal of the malt tax, neither by the deprivation of the earnings of his family during the seasons when farmers are now compelled to employ men in the place of boys, and the boys themselves to go to school with an empty dinner-bag. Surely, Sir Hugh, you would not deprive me of the only good measure to which I am indebted to the Liberal party for passing

—viz., the Amendment of the Game Laws."

"Would you, then, shoot down all the ground-game, and deprive me of my hares? —I don't care so much about the rabbits."

"No, Sir Hugh, I am as fond of sport as anyone; nay more—I am fond of game —I think there is no prettier sight than a brace of old partridges protecting their young in the summer. I like to flush a cock pheasant, and I don't mind a few hares and rabbits. I think a farm would be very dull without them, and of course, as you have large woods, they might, with management and wire netting, be shut off certain fields of young corn where they do most injury. I simply want the benefit of the Act — without injury to your sport."

"Then what do I understand, Mr. Hope?

Do you mean an annual valuation of the damage? because I can't submit to that."

"No, Sir Hugh. What I propose is, that you arrange with me to keep a certain head of game for your sport. I will be head-keeper, and you can allow me fifty pounds per annum for the maintenance of an under-keeper, who shall be placed under me. Then, instead of this man making footpaths all over the farm, and treading down my hedges, he can carry a billhook and repair gaps. I can instruct him as to placing and removing wire fencing. I can utilise him in harvest time when labourers are worth ten shillings a day; and, with your permission, I propose turning those fifteen acres of rough ground near the river into a rabbit-warren, for I am told it is fit for nothing else; the game,

hares, and rabbits, on the whole farm, to be my property when shot, or we will arrange a capitation fee, if you claim them; for I cannot see why a farmer should breed game, and feed them on land for which he pays rent, and then for gamekeepers and his landlord to reap the benefit of his industry."

"Mr. Hope, you are mistaken. Game preserving has not been a profitable investment for the landlord; if my father's books are a specimen; I can assure you that he was always seriously out of pocket. What with corn for the fowls—which are kept to hatch the tame birds—food for the young pheasants, dogs' food, powder and shot, traps, clothing, and night watchers, the balance is always on the wrong side."

"Then why not make a confidant of your tenant, Sir Hugh? Depend upon

it, the half of your game is destroyed by the tenant-farmers, whose interest is opposed by its preservation. Gamekeepers and tenant-farmers never did agree, and it is not likely they will; for the keepers often sell the rabbits and live on the fat of the land, spending their time in public-houses, or sitting on a gate whilst the tenant-farmer toils to keep his rent paid. They usually quarrel, and the sheep-dog is encouraged to poach and to kill the young leverets. The farmer puts his foot into a partridge's nest, and the rivalry makes mischief between the landlord and tenant with no good result. The time has come when our interests should go hand in hand. I don't object to keeping a certain head of game. You can always take what you require for the house, and I think that I have a right to the rest,

or to a capitation, which can be arranged. Of course the rabbit-warren will be a separate matter."

"Just so, and I am determined to try the experiment. The matter is concluded. I will let you Farnborough Hall on the terms you mention. Be so good as to call at my solicitor's, and ask him to prepare a rough draft of the agreement, and to submit it for my approval. Quarter-day will be here in a fortnight, but you need not wait until then if you would like to commence operations."

"Thank you, Sir Hugh. I would like to put some men on to open the ditches and water furrows, and when your new set of steam tackle comes home, may I be the first tenant to use it at the usual rate of hire? And, if you have not engaged drivers, I think my son would like to

superintend the matter whilst we are using it at Farnborough Hall."

"Certainly, Mr. Hope, and I hope we may get on well together. I have some difficulty with some of my tenants, and I look to you to set them an example of reform."

And thus, having arranged all that could be done that day, I returned to the cottage of John Brown, left him some money to proceed with, and instructed him to engage four strong men to dig out the ditches and water furrows, and to direct and superintend the occupation as if it was for himself. It did me good to see the poor old man's countenance brighten as he again found himself to be a man of importance. He cheerfully undertook the task, and I knew full well that he could direct them far better than myself, for he knew the levels and

the old courses, of which I was entirely ignorant. He knew the mouth of every drain, and local knowledge is requisite in all these matters.

How often we see new men from other counties coming to a new farm and trying to "set the Thames on fire" by introducing a new system of farming; and then, when in spite of the remonstrance of their neighbours, they have failed to succeed, they usually lapse into a lower state than the adjoining farmers. It is not thus that we must progress. We must be observant, quiet, patient, and persevering, and we must try small patches of this, that, and the other, before we venture on planting a field with a crop unsuited by nature to its soil.

Our grandfathers were no fools in agricultural matters. Acres and acres of

common ground, broken up within the last thirty years, bore the mark of the plough, tried, no doubt, by our ancestors, and abandoned as unremunerative under tillage; and again, at this moment, that very land is being laid down as pasture, to relapse, maybe, into its abnormal condition. Then again, it was their adage, "that he who by the plough would thrive, must either hold himself or drive." Have we, the tenant-farmers, been doing this of late? No! But my son will drive the first steam plough over Farnborough Hall Farm, and we must all hold together, and see what industry will do, if I can direct it aright. In the matter of the girls and Mrs. Hope, I expect some difficulty; and as to that Mr. Lionel Douglas Aldridge, I rather wish Dick Lawrence had not introduced him to us, for I find that his father's farm adjoins

mine, and that he is what is generally termed "a gentleman farmer." It will be impossible for us to visit with these people and to maintain my ideas of what a farmer's family must return to, if we are to live in England. It will be difficult to "cut" him, but perhaps he will take a hint. We certainly shall not return their visits if they call on us, and this, perhaps, will have the desired effect.

On the other side of the farm I find we have a very old-fashioned farmer, a smock-frock man, Mr. William Bull, who sticks just as closely to his old-fashioned notions as Mr. Aldridge does to his hunter. They tell me the old man (Mr. Bull) has a most industrious daughter, who manages his dairy, and nearly all his business.

What a blessing a good industrious girl is to a father! I must try and get my

Fanny to call on her and get a few lessons, before I get a dairy herd together.

All the children are delighted with the new homestead. There is an old-fashioned kitchen with chimney corners, and a hearth with dog-irons thereon, which at my especial wish is to be converted into a common living-room for us; and David is at work with his hammer and saw, making a modern settle, with arms at one end, for his father to sit and smoke his pipe. The Squire, too, has consented to board the room, for I am afraid of the bricks, or rather of the damp which arises from the constant scrubbing of them. I think we shall all be very happy if we pull together, and I feel quite another man in the markets already. In a few days the lease will be [illegible]nd then we commence business in

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Lionel Douglas Aldridge appears delighted at the prospect of our being neighbours, and really I don't know how to shake him off, for the mistress of Farnborough Hall has taken quite a fancy to him, and Laura has named him "The Lion." Without consulting me on the subject, my wife accepted his offer to send his father's farm wagons for all our ordinary furniture; and when I was on my way to engage a covered spring furniture-van to remove the best things, David ran after me to beg that I would go to his old master's

and look at a pair-horse spring van, to which he himself put the finishing stroke simultaneously with his apprenticeship. Really it is an excellent carriage, made of polished wood, capable of carrying two tons ten cwt., and with two movable seats in front—one seat to fix for a driver to sit on high, when the van is loaded, and the other seat a semicircular one to fit in when there are passengers, leaving still two-thirds of the van for merchandise. Now I never for one moment contemplated driving a pair to market, until I saw this carriage, when it immediately struck me that it was the very thing I wanted. Instead of sending a man, horse, and cart to market, in addition to my own private conveyance, I could myself deliver and collect all requisites, and my boys could drive a load in this way; whereas I could hardly expect

them to drive three horses and a wagon to market, or to the station. I will have a pair of high-stepping half-bred horses, thought I, as I returned home after buying the carriage, and David can move the furniture in it, which will save quite a fourth of the van's value to commence with. We can all go to market together, and it will be the first real step towards reform. But there I had reckoned without my host, for, when I mentioned the thing at home, the female portion of my establishment positively flew at me.

"I thought you had more respect for your family!" "I shall walk." "Nothing but a carrier's cart!" "A dirty old van!" "Calves behind and idiots in front!" were amongst the remarks made by the ladies' of which I took no apparent notice, until my wife said, "What *will* 'The Lion' think!"

This was too much for me, and I admit that I lost my temper, for I replied:

"Hang 'The Lion!' Who is he, I should like to know, that he should step between me and my family? What do I care for his opinion, a useless fellow like that? Why, he doesn't earn sixpence. What is the good of his education, and his fine manners, and expensive habits! Before I allow his opinion to direct one thought of mine, I wish to see him make use of the splendid abilities of which you say he is possessed, and to commence with that useful process of turning brains into bread. I will countermand the wagons, and tell him not to call here again."

This produced a triumphant chorus of "Oh Pa!" and the subject dropped. But I will have the carriage, and if they don't like to ride in it they shall walk. For

once, I'll let "Ma" see who is to be master at Farnborough Hall.

The valuation is complete, for there is not much to value. Fifty acres of wheat; fifty acres of growing grass seeds; ten acres of rye and tares; a heap of mangel-wurzel; and some straw—form the main features. The Squire did not wish me to pay for the straw, but I insisted on its being included; intending, of course, to have the same privilege on leaving the farm.

The wheat looks sickly, so I shall dress it with soot, sown broadcast, and later on with nitrate of soda. I shall hoe it, too, for John Brown says it is a piece of good holding land, and if once the wheat gets ahead of the weeds, and I help it with artificial manure, it will bring a crop; besides which, the hoeing will make the wheat tiller.

The grass seeds are rather weak, and as I see the hares are paying nocturnal visits, and gnawing the hearts out of the clovers, I must direct my under-keeper to keep them off there until the clover gets up a little. A dressing of bone manure will help them to recover. The rye and tares must take their chance, for I see there is as much couch-grass as rye and tares; and although dressing couch-grass makes the root larger, and thus facilitates its removal, still I hate feeding such a farmer's enemy as "twitch-grass"—as it is also called.

Pigs I must have, and cow stock, to tread the straw into manure, for I shall want it badly for the mangel crop. As regards pigs, I have tried all varieties, and I am of opinion that the first cross between the Berkshire black pig and the sandy and black Bicester hog is the most profitable.

They are more prolific than the Berkshire thoroughbred, they grow larger in less time, and they feed quicker. Pigs from this cross resemble the Guinea pig as regards colour, and this Bicester pig is, I think, the direct descendant of the original wild hog of this island.

My son George is anxious for me to buy ten heifers, and he is going to try and rear forty calves with them. The way he purposes doing it is to give each heifer two strange calves at the time of her calving, and when she has taken to them, to let her run with the calves until they are strong enough to live without her. Then he will tie the heifer up, and make her take to two more calves. I anticipate no difficulty so far as the first two calves are concerned, because if the heifer is watched she will be easily gulled; but when it comes to the

second pair of foster sucklings there will be such a bellowing, and such a battle for a few days, as patience and kindness only will overcome. There will be plenty of scope for George's ability at Farnborough Hall, but he must first of all get acquainted with the heifers themselves, by feeding and petting them, otherwise he will be unable to carry out the idea. It will be a pretty sight to see the calves running with their mothers. They will grow strong and independent in half the usual time of weaning, and I hate to see a lot of miserable half-starved weaners about a farm. As a lad, I once weaned eighteen calves without the aid of milk. I gave them flour gruel, boiled linseed strained, hay tea, barley meal, whole beans, clean straw twice a day, a little of the best of hay, cut swedes, and the half of my time; and strange to relate, I reared the

whole of them, and they made a fine herd of cattle, but as calves they were miserable little objects. They were like London back-street children, and they sucked my green smock and each other's ears as if to beg for milk, their natural nutriment.

We have effected our removal, and I have purchased a couple of draught army horses to draw the van. George soon got them to go quietly, and though they only cost twenty-five pounds the two at the hammer, both are young horses. I think they will be very serviceable on the farm, to harrow and so forth. I daresay these horses cost the Government forty pounds each six months since; possibly they are reducing the number of horses, so that one party may reduce expenditure at the expense of the other about to succeed, but the horses will do admirably for me. One of them has been taught

by the soldiers to put his fore feet in the manger when you say "Up!" George likes this sort of thing; I don't. The other one lies down for dead when you say "Down!" and George stands on him and beats a tin can and fires a pistol. Ah well, boys will be boys!

We must breed a couple of horses for this van at our leisure, or perhaps buy a pair of Welsh colts and break them in. That will suit George better. My wife calls the van "Noah's Ark."

The Aldridges have called in a body, such a set out you never saw. Wagonette and pair, and the nagman dressed up as a livery servant. Mr. Aldridge in evening dress and kid gloves, and the silks rustled down the passage of the Hall and swept into our best room, which my women folk will insist on calling the drawing-room; and they had

forestalled me, for, much to my surprise, my wife produced decanters of port and sherry and the biscuits, when I did not know she had any wine in the house.

"You will hunt, of course?" said Mr. Aldridge.

"Why no, sir," I replied. "I've done all that; it doesn't pay."

"And your sons?"

"They won't hunt, sir, with my sanction."

"Strictly business, I see, Mr. Hope."

"Yes, business, and as much pleasure as we can get out of it. We can have a little shooting perhaps, in the way of gamekeepers, and that will be recreation."

"Certainly. I hear that the Squire has given way in your case. We don't row very comfortably; but you see, I am an old tenant, Mr. Hope, and old tenants

don't get any concessions. They may pay their last shilling, and get no reduction, and directly they are sold up, the farm is let at half the rental. The Squire's grandfather and my grandfather were schoolfellows, but he doesn't like to be reminded of the circumstance. Has the Vicar called on you, Mr. Hope? But I forgot to inquire as to your religious opinions."

"Well, sir," I replied, "I don't think religious opinions have much to do with farming, so long as a man does what is right. We have always been Church of England people, and I see no reason to change. At the same time, I look upon all reasonable religions as vessels sailing in the same direction, and no necessity for us to run foul of them so long as they are bound for the same port. People mostly follow in the steps of their parents,

and 'tis very few people who know the rights of religious questions."

"But surely, Mr. Hope, you do not call Dissenters followers of their forefathers?"

"In that case, Mr. Aldridge, I say the Church of England is the mother church, for she created in the hearts of those people a desire for religious service; and if they, being no longer children, choose to run alone, the Church of England should be proud of her children. She might even take a lesson from them, and insist, as they do, on having talented preachers capable of holding large congregations of worshippers, who rely solely upon being self-supporting and independent."

"But the tithe question, Mr. Hope?"

"My farm, Mr. Aldridge, is tithe free. I don't think tenant-farmers have anything to do with tithe. They have no business

to take a farm to pay the tithe. It is a landlord's question, and let the landowners, who sanctioned the Tithe Commutation Act, accept it as a scourge for their own conduct in compelling Charles II. to withdraw his claim upon them to provide soldiers in cases of need, as a condition of their inheritance. The landed interest is well represented in the Houses of Parliament. Irish dictation and gunpowder plots will induce the English landowner to legislate for both countries simultaneously, maybe."

"But you see, Mr. Hope, I have to pay the tithe, and I think it a great injustice."

"So did I at my last farm, but being now a free man in that respect, I can afford to be more generous in my opinions."

Well, there they sat, and gossiped about the parson and the curate, and the doctor and servants, and the Squire. Our

boys were engaged on the farm and not presentable. My wife seemed delighted, but I wished them gone. Lionel appeared very happy in introducing his sisters, who were both very fine young ladies, adorned with rings and brooches, and such like. It is to be hoped that they will pick up husbands with good incomes, for they have never soiled their hands in their lives, by the look of them. At last the Squire himself was seen coming on his horse, and, when he was shown into my little office, they took advantage of that opportunity to take leave without meeting him.

"Sorry to show you in here, Squire," I said, as soon as I could get to him; "also to keep you waiting."

"Don't mention it, Mr. Hope," he replied, in his usual nice manner. "I have been profiting by the opportunity, by looking

round your office. Why, I see you have a regular set of farm books. What an excellent thing! Really, something quite new for a tenant-farmer—the first I have seen. How nicely they are arranged! The work of your sons, is it?"

"Oh no, Squire, my daughter Laura is my clerk."

"There now!" remarked the Squire, "I fancied I detected a lady's neatness and taste in this arrangement. I feel quite curious to know this young lady. Is she within?"

"Yes, sir. Will you walk into what my wife calls the drawing-room?"

"Thank you, no; I hate drawing-rooms and formalities; besides, I have only a few minutes to spare, and I want to inquire about the books."

So I called Laura, and presented her

to our landowner, who stayed much longer than he at first intimated he was able to do, and my wife and Fanny came into the office and made his acquaintance. As he rode off, he requested Laura to get him a set of similar books for his home-farm, and she felt not a little proud of the order, I assure you.

Now for Farmer Bull, my other neighbour. His fences are all overgrown, and I want him either to cut them, or to let me do so, for the wood. He doesn't take that smock-frock of his out visiting, so I must ignore etiquette, and just go on the old-fashioned way of stepping over to see him. They tell me the old man smokes his pipe with a drop of cider in the evening. I think perhaps a little cider will have a beneficial effect on my system, so I will take some tobacco and

my pipe and see if I can break the ice with the old gent; for I do like a regular old-fashioned customer of his kind, if he is not too much of a bigot.

"Mr. William Bull in?"

"Father's at home, sir. What is your pleasure?"

This, then, is his daughter; such a nice neatly-dressed girl. No crinoline or bombazine, or waspyscene. By-the-bye, our girls are dressed wasp fashion, and how they'll get over the three stiles between this and the church on Sunday next is a little joke which I am reserving for my own cracking. I have sent a man with some good stiff bushes to bush up the fence on either side the stile, and the stiles have no steps about this part.

"My business, Miss Bull, is to have a chat with your father about the fence which divides our land."

"Then you are Mr. Hope, sir. Father will be pleased to see you. Come in; I will take your hat," and I was ushered into the presence of Mr. William Bull, who, having closed his family Bible, rose to shake hands, took his spectacles from off his nose, wiped and replaced them, and then said: "Take a seat, sir. I hope we shall be neighbourly. The last tenant of Farnborough Hall and me couldn't hit it at all. He was a captain sort of a gent and rode the high horse 'mendous. There's one field where Mr. Aldridge, and you, and me all turns out together, and if one ain't agree, and t'other ain't agree, and this 'un wants 'ships,' and that 'un wants heifers, and t'other wants a bull and a lot o' milking things, it's 'nation ockard. Will you have a glass of cider, sir? I've got nothing else to offer you."

"Thank you. If we fall out, Mr. Bull, I will warrant it shan't be my fault. If I have anything to say, I will come and see you, and if you have, you come and see me."

"Never goes out nowhere 'cept to market, not since my wife died; but I'll send for ye, and you'll come, won't ye? But there, daresay I shall run up against ye in the field. Our ground runs along side by side, two or three fields, and I gets on the old pony's back and potters about there when we be busy. Here's some tobacco, sir. Never allows a visitor to smoke his own tobacco in my house." And before I left the old gent said: "You may cut the hedges and welcome. I don't want the wood; but which side the ditch was, or whose fence it is, there isn't a living man can tell. But 'tis all the

same property. And as to your daughter, if my gal here can teach her anything about the butter and cheese, I'm sure she will feel a pleasure in doin' of it. You can't larn too much, but you can too little."

I next directed John Brown and his four men to cut these tall overgrown hedges to let the sun into the wheat fields. He has to look out clothes-props for our use, sticks for the raspberry-canes, pea-sticks, bean-sticks, and as many fold-stakes as possible; the rest to be tied in fagots to stack in the rabbit-warren as a home for the rabbits. There is no harbour they like so well; when the fagots are dry we can cart them to the farm and catch the rabbits from the stacks as mice from a rick. There will be a tremendous quantity of couch-grass to come out of the fields,

and this, too, I will cart into a long narrow heap for their especial amusement.

The boys have bought fifty wild doe rabbits, and five large tame brown bucks, to turn down when the netting, and fencing, and harbour is ready. They have planted willows, also, to make summer-houses, wherefrom to watch the progress of their colony.

I believe it will pay better than cultivating the land; and I have agreed to pay the rent, and to stock the colony, and the boys must then look after the rabbits themselves. They can sell them, or do what they like with the rabbits; but they are to find their own clothes from the proceeds, and to keep account of the produce. Surely, with rabbits selling at one shilling and sixpence each, they will save money by the arrangement; and I tell them that

every rabbit that gets out of the enclosure is to be my property, and I will shoot it, for I'm not going to keep many rabbits on the farm, neither does the Squire wish it.

John Brown and I held a consultation about three fields which I had made my mind up to throw down as grass land. He agreed with me, that in the state they were and liable to flood, it was useless to attempt to reclaim them as arable land. They are as full of couch-grass as can be, and the difficulty is to know how to clean them.

Calculating the immense quantity of work before us, John and I have agreed to let them fall down, which means planting them with proper grass seeds without first getting out the couch-grass. It is a known fact that couch-grass cannot live in pasture land beyond three years. It

requires the ground to be ploughed occasionally, to enable it to thrive; so we have arranged to plough the land lightly to get a nice tillage for the seed, and then, when the March winds have mellowed the soil, we shall sow the grass seeds and await the result. When the growth is rooted sufficiently to bear sheep feeding, I shall sow with Alsace clover seed, which I shall let the sheep tread in, feeding them with corn the while, to enrich the ground. The way I like to lay down a grass field is to clean it thoroughly, and then to sow rape-seed and grass seeds together, well rolling the ground, and afterwards feeding off the rape; but, as we are situate, it is no use to undertake more than our proper strength can accomplish in fair weather. If I get caught in the middle of the operation of cleaning the land and showery weather sets in, I

shall probably accomplish nothing by undertaking too much. So down shall go the grass fields, and I will amuse myself by conjecturing how our grandfathers laid down their meadows, before the existence of the great seed merchants who now advertise in every paper.

David is very busy making patent hen-coops for his sisters to rear chickens and ducks with. I have bought them three Aylesbury ducks and a Rouen drake, twenty Dorking hens and two gamecocks; these two cocks have fought a pitched battle, and the conqueror takes the main yard, the vanquished one the outskirts. The girls are to have the proceeds of the poultry, excepting what we require in the house, for pocket-money and finery. I hope to see less finery, and I don't expect to get many fowls for dinner. But never

mind, when game is in season we shan't want them.

That everlasting Mr. Lionel Douglas is actually at work sawing away with David, "like one o'clock," learning how to make hen-coops. That fellow has any amount of impudence. He has just been showing me the blisters on his hands, and asking if he can come and take another lesson to-morrow. Well, hang it, a fellow can't say "No" to any attempt at industry on his part; but we have not returned that formal visit. I've had my way so far, at any rate.

The Squire has been down to pay Laura for the books; and, as I told her not to take anything, he has sent her over a beautiful inkstand. It quite sets off my office, where she will insist on keeping it.

There's a meeting to-night with reference

to the School Board, and as I am to be proposed as chairman of the meeting, I have drawn a small form of petition or memorial, which I think will be suitable for us, having agreed as to existing grievances, to sign and to forward to the proper quarters. This petition humbly prayeth that, Whereas we, the Tenant-Farmers of England, do fully recognise the necessity of education, and the ultimate benefits that will arise to the community at large, when it has found its level; still we, the present generation, beg respectfully to point out that both the labourer and the farmer are just now suffering heavily from the effect of the too forcing nature of the Act, depriving, as it does, the parents of the children of the supplement to their wages, which the children, the boys more especially, would

be able to make by their earnings, and the farmers also of many small contributions to their economy, in consequence of the absence of boy labour and the impracticability of employing full-grown expensive hands to conduct minor operations —as to tend poultry and cattle, to gather up the fragments which remain over and above the main crop, which pays only the rental. We wish to point out that boys who do not acquire a taste for agricultural pursuits before passing the School Board standard, rarely, if ever, return to give the agricultural body who reared and schooled them the benefits of their education; and we in all due humility would suggest that three years be added to the now fixed age of the pupil for passing the standard, that time to be taken from seed-time and harvest, in order that the boys may then

be available for farm work. As an instance of the result of the present system of forcing the children, we would mention that our own schoolmistress has engaged as a domestic servant the girl, who, as a pupil in the Board School, took the highest honours of any girl in the school twelve months since, and that, by the admission of the schoolmistress, she has already forgotten the most simple portions of the instruction of the school. We doubt not that this applies also to the boys, and we believe that an extension of the time usually allotted for their examination would be of decided advantage alike to the labourer and the farmer. Our servant-girl cannot read or write, but she is an excellent girl. Unfortunately, she is just now very poorly, and my wife, much to my annoyance, has engaged Mrs. Shipton,

the regular stereotyped charwoman of this neighbourhood, to come and assist with a little "dab wash," as the girls call it.

Now if there is a person whose presence in my house is to me intolerable, it is the country charwoman. Bodily she may be as strong as a horse. She is usually an excellent servant, a good washer, will scrub and polish with a will and a flourish, and she will earn her food and her one shilling and sixpence per day two or three times over. No doubt she was a cook or a housemaid herself before she married the carter or the shepherd, and her family are often kept very tidy, and her husband's clothes patched regularly. It is not the poor woman herself to whom I object, but it is to the uncharitable services to which her knowledge of the interior arrangements

of other houses are gradually perverted by her lady employers that I refer.

When she first goes out as a charwoman, she is silent enough, and confines her conversation to "Yes—'m" and "No—'m;" but her temporary employer takes her stand by the side of her, with perhaps a few articles of lace or such-like to wash as an excuse for interrogation. She commences with: "So you go to the Deanery once a week, do you? What sort of person is the present housekeeper there now? Do you know who came there to dine the other evening?" etc. etc., until the country charwoman accepts it as part and parcel of her engagement to unfold all particulars of the family arrangements of the five houses she has visited during the week, at the sixth one where she is now cleaning up. I hate this behind-the-scene way

of treating one's neighbours—what on earth good can it do? My wife and daughters to get behind the wicket of the Aldridges, and the parson, and the squire, and the curate, and the doctor! I call it mean. What stream is there, I should like to know, however silvery and lovely it may appear on the surface, which has no mud at its base? Then why stir the mud to contaminate the stream?

I distinctly told my wife to avoid engaging the charwoman of the neighbourhood, for I reasoned with her that this woman would, of course, form her own impression of our family and distribute our private affairs in the same manner. When I found out that she had engaged this Mother Shipton I "pitched into her," and no mistake.

"My dear," she replied, "it is necessary

for the benefit of our family that I should know the private affairs of our neighbours. I like to know people as they really are, and live, and then I like to see how they would present themselves to the world."

"But," said I, "how are you to know that this gossip is the truth? Such ignorant people do not always report the truth; and if they do, the truth grows distortive from the mouth of a blabber. I will go and pay the woman off this minute, and find you another person to assist for a time."

Finding that I was determined, my wife said: "There, don't be foolish, my dear. It would be the talk of the neighbourhood. Leave the internal arrangements to me, if you please, and then we will all ride to town with you in 'Noah's Ark' on market-day."

She conquered, of course; for she knew that this riding in "Noah's Ark" was a great point with me; and, after all, we are only ciphers in the hands of our wives. Aren't we?

The postman brought me a letter and a circular from the Squire, which convinces me that he is going to carry out many sensible ideas. I will read you the circular.

"Being deeply interested in the welfare of my tenantry, I invite you all to dine with me at the Castle Hotel on Saturday next, in order that we may consider the advisability of at once adopting many co-operative plans for the improvement of our position. I have been pressed to join several Farmers' Alliance Societies, emanating from Scotland and elsewhere; but, admitting as I do the immediate necessity of alliance to enable us to combat with

the difficulties which surround the farmer of the present day, I am of opinion that these alliances should be more local, extending afterwards, by delegates if necessary, when the farmers have agreed as to their requirements. At this first meeting I propose, and am particularly anxious, to enrol the whole of my tenantry into one strong body. Among the things which I now see may be discussed at this first meeting are the following, but I shall be glad if any gentleman will make a note of further subjects for discussion. The income tax and the Poor Law; an approved general price for piecework to farm-labourers, to enable those now better fed assistants to do more work and to earn more money—this to extend to ploughing, according to the depth and horse-power; the appointment of a committee to purchase

seed, corn, potatoes, etc., at ordinary market prices, grown on land of a different nature to our own, in order that we may ensure a good change of seed, and thereby save paying exorbitant prices to advertising seed agents who profess to be growers; the same committee to be instructed from time to time to purchase at wholesale prices, direct from the manufacturer, any particular quantity of artificial manure or other merchandise which is likely to be required by the tenants, at wholesale prices; that an arrangement shall be made by which tenants, fattening cattle for the London markets, shall be from time to time advised by telegram as to the imports of foreign fat stock, in order that their own may not be sacrificed by appearing in the market at a time of great influx; that we may consider the advisability of pur-

chasing land near a railway-siding, and erecting thereon a large common warehouse, wherein wool, corn, or other produce may be stored, to await a convenient and good opportunity of sale, pending which the depositor will be allowed to draw what proportion of the value of the goods we may determine on at a moderate interest; this warehouse to be open to other tenant-farmers, being desirable as a proper storehouse for thrashed corn, a check on the monopoly of the miller, the imports, and, maybe, a timely assistance without sacrifice to the needy farmer. It appears to me that an arrangement might be made for a weekly meeting to take place to discuss these and other matters. I promise you my support and personal attention. You, as a body, would be able to do much to resuscitate and to progress; and on hearing

that any one of my tenants is in any difficulty as to attending this meeting, I will send my carriage for him rather than he shall be absent."

This, then, is the Squire's circular, and the letter was to request that I would see Mr. Bull and press him to attend the meeting. As I saw him in his field, I conveyed the Squire's message.

"Ah!" said Mr. Bull, "I be too old for anything of that. I shall go on the old way. Such things is more fit for you and Mr. Aldridge; but I must come, I s'pose, if the Squire's that anxious to see me."

"Depend upon it, Mr. Bull," I said, "it is never too late to mend! Now, your six horses, for instance, might just as well be drawing three ploughs as two, and you would plough one-third more land and save one driver."

"Don't tell me," said Mr. Bull. "I always did plough with three horses, a ploughman, and a driver, and I always shall; and as to them steamers, why, if one would come and plough fifty acres for me for nothing, I would rather give her five pounds to keep off my farm."

Coming home, I met David and George driving a mule, one of the neatest mules I ever saw, quite a small one. They had bought it with their own money, and had quite an adventure with it already. It appears that the mule was frightened by a dog jumping over a half-closed butcher's shop-door, and it ran away. David was driving, and they would surely have been both turned out, and perhaps injured, only that boy George got out on the mule's back, and caught hold of the broken rein and steered him up the hill. I tell them

that I'm not going to keep more cats than catch mice, and that the mule must take the chaff and corn to the sheep, and otherwise make itself useful. Then, when it has earned its living in that way, it will be available for an occasional drive. I thought of buying a donkey, but they are usually so slow, and I always say with reference to a horse, "It costs no more to keep a good one than a bad one;" and you may just as well be able to trot by other people out of the dust of their wheels.

I think, that on some farms, where one has to keep horse-power which is only required in full force at certain times of the year, large mules, such as those bred by the Duke of Wellington, which are sixteen and seventeen hands high, might be kept to advantage. A mule of this description is equal to any horse. It will live seven or

eight years longer than a horse, is less liable to disease, and will thrive on rough food which is often wasted, and is unsalable. A mule requires no corn when it is not at hard work. Its winter coat is double the thickness of the horse's; and as to its vicious propensities, one has only to visit the military stables, where a number of mules are now trained for Military Transport Service, to be convinced that the kicking propensities of the mule are due more to the ignorance of the carters than to the nature of the much-abused animal.

Mine being a light-tillage farm, I intend to breed some smart quick-stepping horses, a cross between the old-fashioned short-legged cart-horse and the Yorkshire carriage-horse. I should not have patience with such slow-going hairy-legged horses as those possessed by Mr. Bull. It takes four horses,

a man, and a boy, the whole day to deliver a carriage of about fifteen quarters of corn to the town. They usually bring one load of manure on the return journey, perhaps weighing one ton ten cwt., and I calculate, that by this means it costs him quite two shillings per quarter for the delivery of his corn, an item of consideration when applied to the whole of his produce.

Mr. Aldridge, strange to say, observes the same practice, driving four horses at length, the only difference being that his horses are good ones, full of condition. Two horses in a light van would take nearly the same quantity, and make two journeys; but he is proud of his prancing team advertising his consequence on the high road. A tradesman or a merchant could scarcely afford such waste power, and I do not intend to vie with my neighbours in this respect.

John Brown and his four men are getting on well with the hedging.

I overheard Mr. Bull say to John Brown over the hedge:

"Strongish team of men, Master John. Why, I've only got three labourers on the whole of my farm, besides the cattle-men. Mr. Hope won't be able to stand this long, depend upon it."

Poor old gentleman! I did not appear to have heard his remark, for I already knew his opinions too well, and his position. He appears to have double the quantity of land suited to his capital. He has one small flock of sheep only, and they are half starved. His land will scarcely produce a new corn for an old one. He employs scarcely any labour, and exhausted nature refuses to comfort him by producing a crop. Ay, and she will refuse. The past three

seasons excepted, I may say that the land keeps an excellent Dr. and Cr. account. Most of us—indeed it was my own case at my last farm—hold too much land for our capital and our attention. It is wonderful what can be done, and what is done, in some market gardens in the vicinity of towns. Last year I noticed an excellent crop of early potatoes, in a field rented at 4*l.* per acre by a market gardener. Between the rows he planted cabbage plants. He cleared an enormous crop of potatoes, and the cabbages then grew rapidly. They would have made a first-rate piece of sheep feed in the event of their being unsaleable as garden produce; but he cut them all for the shops, and planted rye, which will soon be saleable at from 8*l.* to 10*l.* per acre, and then with a coat of manure the ground will be wholesome for potatoes again. All this

time a farmer would be content with one crop of swedes for his sheep, and probably leave them half hoed if labour was scarce or expensive.

Our clergyman and his curate have both called on us. The clergyman's living brings him in a thousand a year, and he has another engagement at a college, which brings him in another thousand; besides which his wife has an income. He is a nice, comfortable, pleasant old gentleman, who takes great pride in the muscularity of his offspring, a son and several daughters. The son is very fond of riding and driving, the girls of boating; and they hired the town-hall last week, and gave a ball for the entertainment of two hundred and fifty of their guests, their own house not being sufficiently commodious for the number of their party.

"Obligations," said the reverend, "grew from time to time; and being determined that my family should discharge their indebtedness to our friends, I thought I would make one common affair of it, and it all passed off admirably." Nevertheless, the plate goes round every service, and the curate, a hardworking clever young man, who receives 70*l.* a year for his services, assures us that there is great distress in the parish, and that unless something is done to relieve it, there are many able-bodied men who must go into the workhouse.

The little shopkeepers, too, are in a very bad state; for, in addition to having no trade, they have a heap of book-debts, and very little credit. They have also to contribute to the increasing poor-rate; and the baker, who called to express his sorrow at our determination to bake our own bread,

and to solicit our custom for other articles, assured me that if I saw his bread-book, I should say that he had been the "Good Samaritan" to the poor throughout the winter, and that he scarcely knows how to hold on to his business.

But here comes my Fanny, all smiles, and with her hair so nicely in order, that I feel sure she has some favour to ask me, which I can scarcely refuse, seeing that she has been regularly to Miss Bull to learn the secrets of butter-making. Fanny is usually deputed by her mother to break the ice to me if there is anything wanted, so I will anticipate her wishes this time.

"Well, Fanny, what is it, my dear?"

"Oh, you are a good Pa! I only want to talk to you. Am I too large to sit on your knee as I used to? Let me try."

"Fanny—you little cheat!—I know there is something up. What is it?"

"Only Ma wishes me to ask you——"

"I thought so."

"You thought what, Pa?"

"I thought she had commissioned you to come and wheedle something out of me."

"There, then, you are just wrong, for Ma doesn't want anything. No pin-money—she doesn't want to give a party—we don't want new bonnets, and we are not going to ask company."

"Then what is it, my pet?"

"Oh, you silly old Pa! Why, it's only to ask you to have 'Noah's Ark' nice and clean, and some cushions put in it for market-day. There," she said, giving me a kiss, "I knew you wouldn't be cross at that. Would you, Pa?"

"Of course not, my child, and David has already put a new coat of varnish on the carriage and made it quite smart. But that isn't all you want to say, is it, Fanny?"

"Why no, not quite all, Pa; but I don't know how to begin it. It isn't anything to touch your pocket-strings, though. I want you to enable me to answer an argument we have been having upstairs, Pa. I say that it would be quite proper for a family to visit anywhere where their father went first, and Laura says not—what do you say, Pa?—if their father didn't know they were going."

"Why, of course it would, my child. If the father is on friendly terms with the family and visits them, surely he can't object to his daughters or any part of his family going."

"Of course not, Pa," she said; and kissing me several times, Fanny danced round the room, and said I was a good old Pa, and hummed, "Of course not, of course not"—her frolic being interrupted by a loud knock at the front door. Who should it be but "The Lion;" and Fanny answered the door almost as though she expected him.

"Good-evening, Mr. Hope," said "The Lion." "Father has sent me to present his compliments, and to say that he is in great distress with reference to an accident that has happened to our favourite peacock. He fears it will be necessary to amputate a limb; and, although he is afraid you will laugh at his love for the bird, he knows of your skill in the matter of anatomy, and he would be greatly indebted if you would come back with me in the carriage, to give

him your opinion. I am to say that if he attempts the operation without the aid of some gentleman like yourself, he is afraid he will lose a valuable friend and neighbour, and would you do him the honour to come?"

"You flatter me," I said. "I certainly know something of anatomy; and if your father attaches so much importance to the life of the bird, I will certainly come and do what I can for him. I don't like to be unneighbourly. Just wait a few minutes whilst I change my coat and boots, and I will be with you."

It was not long before I was seated in Mr. Aldridge's handsomely-furnished study, who commented on the beauties of the peacock, entered into a long discussion as to the Squire's circular, insisted on my tasting some especial whiskey, and delayed operations as to the peacock.

"I left it," said he, "down before the kitchen fire. I wish to see the effect of a dose I have given it. I will go and see if it is time for us to proceed with the operation."

He was absent for some minutes; and when at last he returned, he handed me a sharp knife, and bade me follow him.

I did so, and he led me into a large dining-room, wherein was served a smoking hot dinner, and among the guests seated at the table were my wife and four children.

"There," said Mr. Aldridge, as he pointed to a cooked peacock on the table, "there is the bird; kindly perform the operation of dissection."

My position for the moment was somewhat embarrassing. I had been called in as *aide-de-camp*, and now my host sought to pervert my services.

What was my course of duty? Should I retire *à la* Transvaal and leave my army, who were dressed in their best uniforms, to face about, and retire with ignominy? No; I had been solicited to attend. My family was fully equal to the occasion; there I was, even against my own will, and, said I, "Those who brought about this business shall suffer for their pains." Although individually I might have retired, still I had the feelings of my people to consider; so down I sat and carved the peacock.

I am not an advocate for lukewarm measures, and I am sure, had you heard the laughing, merry, happy jokes which my Fanny and others sent round the table, and the good-natured replies; had you seen us drink the health of our hostess and host, you would never have guessed under what

peculiar circumstances I had been bidden to the feast.

The poor peacock's "tale" will oft unfold in days to come, I hope, and form the banner of our friendship. When the ladies (you will perhaps excuse my adding "ladies" to peacock and champagne; common people don't eat peacocks) had withdrawn, Mr. Aldridge commenced by addressing me:

"Mr. Hope," he said, "I hope you will excuse the somewhat surreptitious manner in which I obtained your company this evening, but I assure you that Mrs. Hope accepted the invitation for you, and it was not until the eleventh hour that I was informed of my part in the peacock play. I had to act without even a rehearsal. I was somewhat annoyed; but you have a wife and daughters of your own—what shall we say to them?"

"Say to them, sir," I said; "why, let us drink their jolly good healths and forgive them all their little nonsense."

And so we did, in a bumper.

"Now it is all over, and the ice is broken," continued Mr. Aldridge, "I'm really very glad, for to tell you the truth, Mr. Hope, I am sadly in need of your friendship. Farming has come to such a pitch, that it is evident that if I, or people like myself, who have hitherto been called gentlemen-farmers, continue to farm, we must give it up as a 'hobby' and take to it as a 'business,' or it will take us down with a vengeance. It seems to me that we are divided into three classes of farmers. First there comes my own class, with sufficient capital to live without farming by investing that capital to advantage. As I have been going on I

could have saved money by being out of farming, and still have kept my hunter. It is evident, therefore, that most of my class who do not care to go into the real business of farming, but who manage it with a farm bailiff, and a ride round the farm in fine weather, will say 'good-bye' to a losing game. Secondly, there are the tenant-farmers, who, by reason of the bad seasons, have got into difficulties. They now hold double the acreage warranted by their capital. They cannot leave their farms, by reason of their responsibilities and inaptitude for other callings. Their fate hangs on the weather and the clemency of their landlord. Then comes your class; the business man, the man who is going to compete with the Chicago corn-factors, the foreign meat supply, the Dutch milk and butter importers, the compressed hay im-

porters, American maltsters; in fact, all foreigners, down to growers of apples and Jersey blue potatoes. This man has before him Free Trade and taxed labour. Now, can he do it? That's the point."

"Well," I replied, "the only course I see open to me, is to endeavour to combine old-fashioned habits with the improvements of the age. This I am trying to carry out in practice, and I shall perhaps be able to tell you more about the result in three years' time. For the present I am trying to lay nothing out without a fair prospect of return. I shall not rush into anything, but I hope to get the farm steadily round, and, once it is clean and in condition, to keep it there."

"Yes, that is your mark, Mr. Hope, and I know—in fact, your wife told me—that one of your wishes is to keep down your

housekeeping expenses. Now don't misunderstand me—you come and see me, as I am, and I will come and see you, as you are. I have a private income, or rather my wife has, or we could not live as we do. I know it is wrong to live so at the same time, and hitherto our acquaintances have been far removed from all agricultural intercourse. My position now somewhat resembles that of a butcher I know, who, having retired on a comfortable income, set himself up as a guardian of the poor. He was elected, and very soon became a great man in the town, ignoring all his old acquaintances. Well, the other day he was found out at some of his old games, inseparable from the life of a jobbing butcher, for he was bowled out in the act of having sent a useless milch cow into the workhouse *pro bono pauperis,* and on which

he had secured about five pounds for himself through the agency of a third party. That man's position is somewhat isolated. His new associates won't recognise him, and his old 'pals' won't have him again. I don't mean to say that gentlemen-farmers are dishonourable, but I do say that we have courted the acquaintance of a class of society who don't belong to us, and the sooner we wish them good-bye the better. But this cow business reminds me of the Squire's circular. I hope he will take a little off my rent, and grant me an amended lease, and then he may rely on my co-operation, for, depend upon it, he is doing the right thing after all. I see he mentions 'the Poor Law.' Now I am told as a fact, that only one-sixth of the amount collected actually finds its way to the poor; the rest all goes for red tape and management. I

hope you will bring all the information you can collect on this subject to the Squire's meeting; I will do the same. Our grandfathers managed the poor themselves, and there were no mansions called lunatic asylums in their time. Most of the lunatics are capable of doing a little farm work. It is high time the law was altered. I see that one of the large costs is the collection of the poor-rate; thus we are saddled with an unnecessary tax. The Queen doesn't waste her money like that. We have to send for a dog-tax, or a gun-tax—catch the collector calling three times for that. Then why should we pay men to run about for poor-rates? Bad enough to be taxed once; but we are taxed six times for one pauper, because we don't deal with him ourselves. In towns, I know it is impossible; but on a farm there is always light work for an aged

pauper, who would rather keep his cottage if he had a little help; whereas we say: 'If you can't work enough to keep a house over your head you need not work at all. We will house and keep you.' Once the pauper loses his few belongings and enters the workhouse, depend upon it the other inmates soon reason him out of all moral attempt to be again self-reliant, and he is on our rates for the rest of his life. What do you think, Mr. Hope?"

"I am going, Mr. Aldridge, to spend an evening with an old guardian of the poor, and when I have satisfied myself as to certain points as to which I am in doubt, I shall be better able to give an opinion. By-the-bye, can you tell me the best sorts of osiers to plant? My rod-beds are in a dreadful state, and I wish to get a few bolts of best two-year-old rods at whole-

sale price, to stick in the ground ready for sets to plant out, for I must trench and replant the whole of them, piece by piece, a portion every year."

"Yes," said Mr. Aldridge, "I have the best and most remunerative kind of rods—send as soon as you like, before we commence to strip them. Now that trenching and replanting will cost you ten pounds per acre, and you will grow next to no rods for the first two years. I think that this is one of the legitimate unexhausted improvements which was given to us with the right hand and snatched away with the left."

"What are your political opinions, Mr. Aldridge?" I inquired.

"Politics—politics—Oh! I really don't know. I don't think there have been any farmers' politics since that last one shilling

was taken off the corn duty. I'm very much inclined to think with my man who farms my rod eyots. He has a little island to himself, and he keeps a few game-fowls there, with my consent. I usually buy the chickens of him. When I want a little political information I have only to open the ball, and he is delighted to be able to enlarge upon the subject. The other day we were talking about affairs in the East, and he said: 'Ah, now you see them two old gamecocks of mine, I calls one of them Mr. Gladstone and the other one Mr. Disraeli. Every morning one stands on one of those heaps and the other stands on the other, and there they crow at one another. I throw at 'em sometimes, but 'tis no good, up they get again, and instead of taking the hens off round the island about their business to pick up the worms and slugs,

they stop there and crow, and if one puts himself forward to make a move the other one flies at him directly. Nearly all the sittings have been useless this year, and the only good brood of chickens we have got is them black 'uns as the eggs comes from that farm across the water. I calls them my Zooloos.' "

"He must be a strange man," I observed.

"Yes; and when you go for the rods, you have a chat with him. I had rather you selected them; but there, you don't know the sorts. I will meet you there when you like, and he will be posted in 'Lawson *v.* Labouchere,' or any other topic, I'll be bound. The last remark of his was with reference to this case. He said: 'I likes them opposition papers doing "the moral" about Lawson. Why, there ain't one of 'em but what's got money-lenders'

advertisements in. One is addressed, I see, to farmers and others: "A private retired gentleman wishes to lend on personal security." Nice old private retired gentleman, I daresay. Why, I'd sooner farm one of them babies as they make so much fuss about than I'd have this nice old private gentleman on my premises. What do you think, master?'"

"And what did you think?"

"Oh, I didn't pretend to take much notice of him. I simply said that a little milk for a baby would be inexpensive compared with a money-lender's costs. He never stops working when he is talking, and I often glean information from the man. How does your son George get on with the steam-plough driving? I think I understood that he has been with Mr. Horace's set all the week."

"He can speak for himself. He tells me he is posted, and the Squire's two new engines and plough and drag gear are at the station. He is going to get up steam and drive them to Farnborough Hall to-morrow, under the Squire's supervision."

"Just as I thought," said one of Mr. Aldridge's daughters, as she opened the door and was followed by her sister. "Here they are, room full of smoke, and talking about mangels, and hay, and straw, and pigs, and sheep. If you farming gentlemen get together you are so forgetful of the weaker sex; but I have come to rout you out, and to ask you to join us in the drawing-room."

"Poor little sex!" said Mr. Aldridge, as he rose to obey. "Come along, gentlemen, let us go and see what their last weakness

is. I guess we shall find it out before supper-time."

As I listened to the singing, and admired the excellent taste of all connected with Mr. Aldridge's drawing-room and his family, I could but reflect what a pity it is that good education should unfit us for farm work. But there, I see it; *good* education would not do it. Then what shall I term the instruction which has been given to young ladies of this class? However, I must not include the Misses Aldridge, because their mamma has a private income. To others who have no such income, and whose parents are likely to be led into expensive habits because their dear daughters won't soil their lovely little fingers, and their sons will hunt instead of breeding hunters for others—I shall term it "incomplete education."

"What is the Squire going to charge you for the steam work?" inquired Mr. Aldridge.

"I am only going to cultivate," I replied, "and he has agreed to cultivate one way for ten shillings per acre, and fifteen shillings for both ways, finding coal and water. George is to manage the engines, superintend the work, book orders, and keep accounts. I shall be in a fix for the want of horse-power to follow the steam tackle, and I was going to ask what you would charge me for the use of eight or ten horses for a week, if you could spare them. I am going to buy some horses at a sale as soon as there is one near here, or I shall run up to London to attend another army horse sale."

"My good sir," said my host, "you shall have my horses and welcome. I shall

simply charge you the men's wages; perhaps I may be glad of your assistance some day; and, Master George, I shall be glad if you will come and cultivate twenty acres for me when you have finished your father's. I think that the only time a steam cultivator is of service to a farmer is when the wheels of the engines will move along on the headlands without sinking in, and the weather has been so dry and windy that the ground will work like an ash-heap. Which do you think is the best way of killing couch, Mr. Hope? Are you an advocate for letting it lie on the top and die, or for carting it off, or for burning it?"

"My dear sir," I replied, "there is as much art in killing couch-grass as there is in cooking venison. I am usually guided by the fire—the weather. Sometimes, when the ground is rough and in lumps, rolling

it into the ground would only keep it alive. At other times it is best to roll it and burn it. I like to drill the ashes with my swede seed; but I have such a splendid crop of couch that I shall be able to spare the boys a mountain of it for their rabbit-warren. We can turn the heap in twelve months' time, and mix a little road dirt and lime with it."

"Don't forget to send the girls one load," said my wife.

"A load of couch-grass!" exclaimed Mrs. Aldridge, "what can they want it for?"

"We want it for the bottoms of the fowl-houses," replied Laura. "There is nothing we find so good. The hens dust themselves in it, and they scratch it about and pick all the shoots out. It makes such beautiful flower-mould afterwards, and it

will keep the hen-house free from fleas compared with straw."

"Did the captain leave you any flowers in the greenhouse at Farnborough Hall?" inquired Mr. Aldridge.

"No," said my wife; even the grape-tree is dead, and we are not going to furnish it again."

"What a pity! Why, the hot-water pipes are laid on from the kitchen, and you can grow anything in it. The captain did wonders there."

"Mrs. Aldridge," I observed, "we are going to grow eggs in cold weather there. I think it will be more profitable to a farmer that way. I shall line it with wire netting to protect the glass, and the girls are rearing some early pullets in it already, which will lay at Christmas if they are fed on warm food in a warm place. I am passionately

fond of flowers, but I can't afford to keep a gardener."

"How it will surprise the ghost," said Fanny, "when he comes down and finds fowls in the greenhouse."

"What ghost?" I inquired.

"The Farnborough Hall ghost. Mrs. Shipton assures us that he has haunted Farnborough Hall ever since old Golding, the miser, lived there. This old man was immensely rich, but he shut himself up in the Hall. If anyone called to see him his wife didn't dare ask them to take anything. He never went to church, or to see anybody. When his wife offended him, he used to chain her up to the top of the well. She died first, and the only person who was allowed to enter the house after her death was his farm foreman. He found his master dead in the attic one Monday morning, by

the side of his money-chest, and Mrs. Shipton says that Golding and his wife often visit the Hall. You can hear the old man chopping wood at the bottom of the well, and then if you listen at one o'clock in the dead of the night, the ghost of the wife appears in the garret, a white wraith, and she rattles her chain at the old man, and disappears through the window."

We all laughed immoderately at Fanny's ghost, but she declared it was a fact, for Mrs. Shipton told her that the attic window had been mended lots of times, and it was always found to be broken the morning afterwards, and that confirmed the matter.

"To convince you, my dear, that it is all a stupid superstition," I said, "the window shall be repaired again, and then you will see that it is all nonsense. I have seen lots of ghosts in my time, but they turned out

to be moonshine representations, except in one case, and that was worse still."

"And what was that?" inquired the young people; "do tell us."

"Well, my dears, I was riding home one night, about twelve o'clock, on a first-rate horse. I had been to see your mother, you must know, and it was as dark as pitch. I had a horse that could trot so evenly and safely, that I had only to sit on him and wait until I reached home, and he was going his own pace, along the middle of the road between two woods, near a wild common, where I had been always taught to look out for the ghost of a man who was murdered at a cottage hard by. I always woke up a bit at this spot, and stuck my knees into the saddle, for I had my doubts about this ghost; when all of a sudden my horse gave a terrific jump over something

white in the road, which sprang up and howled out with an echo which fairly doubled me up for a moment."

"Were you thrown?" inquired Mrs. Aldridge.

"No," I replied; "I managed to stick on, and my horse ran away, until he reached home."

"Depend upon it, that was a ghost," said Fanny. "I know there are such things as ghosts."

"No, my dear, it wasn't a ghost. I could hear what it was as I galloped away; but if ever a man's heart was in his mouth, mine was."

"Then what could it be?" said two or three voices.

"Why, it was a white donkey lying in the dust in the middle of the road."

"An excellent joke," observed Mr.

Aldridge; "but I must confess I should have been unnerved had it happened to me."

"But," said Fanny, "a donkey can't get into our garret, or down the well, and I declare I heard old Golding chopping wood at the bottom of our well, and so did Jemima, our servant. You ask her."

Much mirth followed Fanny's belief in the Farnborough Hall ghost. Mr. Lionel undertook to come and watch the ghost any night, and to ask him how he is, and if he knows of any more money-bags, which cannot be of much use to him now.

I suggested that he should haul up some of the chopped wood for fire-lighting, and Mrs. Aldridge thought it would be the best way to catch Mrs. Golding and

to see if the chain she rattles is made of gold.

After supper we had a round game, and Mr. Aldridge sent us all home in his carriage. 'Twas past the hour of midnight.

When the bell rang at six o'clock we were rather unwilling to turn out of bed. My wife was excused appearance at breakfast. David and I drove to the station to receive the new set of steam-plough tackle. George had gone on before, and he had nearly got up steam. There was a foreman from the maker's Iron Works, who came for a few days just to set George right, and, whilst they were unpacking and loading the belongings into the Squire's wagon, I strolled into the station-master's office to have a little chat with him respecting an application I had

made to the railway company asking them to arrange to tip me a hundred tons of London stable-manure on the railway embankment opposite my house, and offering to rent the whole of the embankment of them at double the price of my other lands if they would grant me the concession, and thereby save me attempting to haul the manure from the station.

He informed me that the manager declined to entertain the proposal, on the ground that the stoppage of the train to unload on the main line was unsafe.

"But," said I "you stop trains to unload ballast and sleepers and rails."

"That is compulsory work, sir. The only way you can arrange the matter is to get permission to lay in a siding at your own cost and then guarantee us so much traffic."

"This is not possible," I replied. "If you had railway trucks to tip sideways, the unloading of a train-load of manure could be accomplished in half an hour, and there are several such spaces between the running of your trains."

"It can't be entertained, sir," said the station-master. "It doesn't pay us to carry manure or hay and straw at all."

"There must be something wrong, somewhere," I replied. "I am a shareholder in this railway; I should be glad of a better dividend. I must get the Squire to see into this. Good-morning."

As I passed out of the office a respectably-dressed man touched his hat to me, saying:

"How are you, sir? You don't remember me I suppose."

"I remember your face, but I can't quite call you to mind. Oh, I see now.

Why, it is John, you lived with me as carter for two years at my old farm, did you not? Are you living in these parts?"

"No, master; I only came up for a day or two with my son. He is station-master here."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I got him on the 'taligraph,' and then they made him a clerk, and now he is station-master, and he ain't twenty years old yet; but he's a good boy."

"And your other children?" I inquired.

"Both the gals is Board-School teachers, and t'other boy, he's a engine-driver. He takes his three pounds a-week now."

"And your wife?"

"She's dead, poor soul! but my daughters keeps house. I'm farm-bailiff now to Squire Bunkem. He has got eighteen farms not let, and I hope they won't let

just yet, leastways not mine, for I takes my thirty shillings a-week, and house and coals, and a good garden."

"These bad times don't seem to have injured you, John. What with education, and the ruin of tenant-farmers, you are like a lawyer who thrives on distress and cross-actions."

"Well, sir, I mustn't grumble. I often think of the time when I had 'em all to keep on eleven shillings a-week, and if my wife hadn't took in washing we should never have scrambled through it; but the steam got regular into her, and she was sort of chronic towards finish. Hopin' no offence, master, will you step across to the public and take a drop of anything, 'cos if you will, you be welcome."

"No, no, no, thank you," I said; "good-morning," and I awoke as one from a

dream, and hurried off to the boys, who were now ready to drive the engines to Farnborough Hall. My horses were steam-proof, for they had been in the army. Indeed, if the railway company would put up a little shed next to the cattle-pen at the stations, and allow people to keep a colt in there night and day for one week before they broke it in, all horses would be steam-engine proof. Seeing that occasional travellers will shortly be driving about in steam tricycles, this opportunity would save many an accident. An occasional traveller will be able to ring his parlour bell over night and to say to his servant: "Mary, I am going out to-morrow morning; when you get up, just light the gas in my tricycle, and dust it for me. I shall want a few sandwiches and a little sherry in the box, and I shall be home to

dine at six o'clock, as I'm only going up to London and back."

The Squire wished me to call round with my Noah's Ark and collect some of the neighbouring farmers to come and see us start the steam-plough. All went admirably, and John Brown said: "There now, sir, if old Golding could only wake up and see that cultivator going along over the hill by itself out of sight of the engines, I verily believe he would never come out of the well into the attic again, for he would be afraid that the farm was in 'tother's' hands."

After we had crossed the field, the couch-grass was laid on the top almost clean enough to burn without rolling or harrowing. We soon cleared one end of the field, and then, having hired two plough-teams of Mr. Bull, I got them to plough

up that end again so as to finish cleaning it.

"What makes you in such a hurry with that one small piece?" inquired Mr. Aldridge.

"That is another of my fancies," I replied. "Of the three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, I suppose a farmer sends his horses to plough two hundred mornings. They always go to plough without a load, whereas they might easily take two loads of farm-manure with them and bring the carts home at night. It will sometimes happen that there is no land ready to receive it, in which case it can be placed in a heap ready to go on directly the crop is off."

"But," said Mr. Aldridge, "scientific men tell us that the manure requires rotting and turning and keeping in the

dry. They say that the gases escape and the fertilising properties will evaporate."

"No doubt that theory is an excellent thing, Mr. Aldridge; but practice tells me that if you will put the manure on the land and plough it in, Nature will do all the rest. If the manure is a bit raw, it will last longer in the earth; but, for experiment's sake, you put weight for weight of well-rotted scientific farmyard manure on one land of corn, and then put the same weight of raw manure on the next: watch the crops for three years, and tell me the result. But that is not my chief object; what I want to do is to get more labour out of my men, and to get four hundred loads of manure carted to the fields without losing time. Besides, I don't think dung-yards are healthy for our families or for our cattle. It cannot

be healthy for pigs to sleep on a hot-bed of manure. They shiver when they come off it. Heaping manure does not add to its fertilising properties. It simply rots it. The earth will do that, and will collect all the oil, fat, sugar, starch, gum, albuminous and nitrogenous compounds, as these scientific men call them. Do you know, it always amuses me to hear a farmhouse recommended for a healthy change of air for an invalid. Ask a medical man what he thinks of the heap of decaying vegetation in a farmyard. I had no less than six fevers as a farmer's son, and had a job to struggle through them."

"Maybe," said Mr. Aldridge, "that accounts for your distaste for a refuse-heap."

"Not unlikely; and I believe it is

thus that we breed cattle diseases. We ignore all sanitary measures and clear our pigsties about once a-month. No, the earth is the place for manure, and this little spot is where I will commence placing it day by day. That reminds me—Here, John Brown, just go and ask Master David to put his mule in the cart and to go for ten bushels of lime and some brushes, and to-morrow you put two of your men on to limewash all the cattle-sheds. Sweep them out first, and pick all the manure off the flooring. Limewash the whole of the inside, mangers and all, and spread lime on the floor, for who knows what distemper may be lurking in the corners for my new cattle which I must buy at the fair."

George was delighted with the engines and their work; even Farmer Bull came to peep over the hedge.

"What do you think of that, Mr. Bull?" I said triumphantly.

"Ah," said the old man, "very well, perhaps, for barley, or for roots, but you just wait till it comes round for wheat, and see if you can keep a plant. I knows you won't. It shakes all the solidness of the land, and 'twill be as hollow as blazes. No steamers for me. You can keep my horses until it rains, for if I was to plant anything now 'tis so dry the seed-corn would only malt in the ground. Never was such a season for cleaning land, Mr. Hope—never since I can remember; but there won't be no grass this year—never is when it sets in dry, and hard frosts every morning."

Market-day and the Squire's meeting arrived simultaneously. It was to be our first family drive in Noah's Ark, and the

boys turned us out in first-rate style. New harness, new cushions; in fact, I may say, a well-appointed turn-out. George could not leave his engines, but David and the girls came with us. Once on the road all my wife's objections vanished, and on our way to town we trotted by the reverend's son, who was driving a lame horse and a high-blower. The curate was with him, and they were evidently struck with our "Brandy" and "Soda," as they blew their noses and rattled their hoofs on the hard road. The girls had a host of requisites to collect—coarse material for making daily dresses, butter-cloths, pats, and such like, and they positively coaxed me into bringing a dressmaker home. I was anxious to please them, so the first purchase I made was a nice lot of roses and shrubs for the flower-borders. I had

a double motive in this. I love roses, and I wanted to drive home loaded. Next market-day I hope to take butter and eggs to market, to take my clover, and mangel, and turnip-seeds home with us; but we will commence with flowers and a dressmaker—that is the way to get on with the ladies.

How the farmers and dealers and market-people stared as we trotted up the market-place paved with stones. I don't know if it was "Brandy" and "Soda," or the carriage, or the girls, but, between you and me, I am a bit proud of our girls' yellow hair, blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and good figures. Regular Saxons; but, there, perhaps I'm foolish; come down and judge for yourself.

All the Squire's tenants came to a man; and, when the table was cleared and the

Squire had ordered some wine—don't be astonished; yes, wine I say—well, perhaps farmers have no business with wine, but you must remember the Squire paid for it, and we like a glass of good wine. It cements friendship and promotes good fellowship. You gentlemen who live in towns, and have to sit at a desk the next morning, should be very careful how you indulge in it; but you see we can walk it off, with a gun on our shoulder, and it doesn't give us the headache, as it does you. Tell me, also, what charitable institution there is which does not owe its starting subscriptions to open hearts after the cloth has been removed. More good measures have sprung from a glass of wine than evil actions from the vicious propensities of a drunkard. The only public house open to this idiot is the tavern, which is thus

unfairly denounced as his murderer; and those whose aim it is by their example of total abstinence with a view to reclaim this man, are as worthy of our good wishes and support as would be the man who said: "Gentlemen, fill your glasses. I have to propose that we found a new hospital for the maintenance of all tithe-owners, for they are no longer safe at large."

Well, when the Squire saw that we had all charged, he addressed us as follows:

"Brother farmers,—I address you as brother farmers, because I wish to attend these meetings as a brother farmer. If any of you think I have no right so to address you, all I have to say is, that I claim that right, inasmuch as I come amongst you for the purpose of trying to redress our grievances. I will commence at home, by telling you that those of you who are under

an old lease, and who feel disposed to renew your farm leases, are at liberty to have your farms revalued, and a new lease shall be granted to you from this date." (Here the applause was immense, as there were several of the tenants so hampered. They hammered the table until two glasses were broken, and it was with difficulty that the Squire resumed. Twice I observed Mr. Bull take off his spectacles and polish them. He smiled at the Squire, and once rose to address him, but on cries of "Sit down! Sit down!" he resumed his sitting posture, and the Squire proceeded.) "Gentlemen, it seems very sad indeed, that men like yourselves, with capital, and a thorough knowledge of the business of farming, should be unable to invest that capital, and to bring your abilities to bear upon the industry so necessary to the well-being of the whole

community with a profitable issue. There must be something wrong somewhere. Where it is, what it is, and how it is to be remedied, is then the object of my calling you together, hoping that we may be able to discover the real secrets of the case, and purposing that we all pull together with a view to economy and reform, to enable us to tide over this crisis." (Hear, hear! hear, hear! resounded from all lips but those of Mr. Bull, who said, "Capital! capital!") "Gentlemen," continued the Squire, "as I told you in my circular, I am of opinion that farmers' meetings should be more local—two or three in each county, according to the area. It has been said that many farmers are in the habit of attending the weekly market when they have no business to transact. An association of this kind would demand your

presence here monthly at any rate; and then, as a body, instead of simply talking over our grievances, we could go to work to correct them. The major matters, so far as the burdens on the land are concerned, would appear to be the tithe, the law of entail, the absence of protection for unexhausted improvements, the highway rate, the school board, the income-tax, the forthcoming rivers bill, and the poor law. Some of these matters are now engaging the attention of the House of Commons for and against our interest. It is our duty to work up information for the use of those who are fighting our cause. Apart from these great questions are the minor matters, which concern us all. I refer to labour and to buying and selling corn and cattle. It is evident that if we are to have good labourers, we must offer them greater facili-

ties for earning money by piecework. I know that their position has improved immensely, whilst that of the farmer has deteriorated; the labourers are in many cases receiving one-third more money than formerly. We have also to employ inexperienced extra hands at harvest-time, at double their value, because there are no young farm labourers coming on to take the places of the older ones. Gentlemen, you can easily calculate amongst yourselves what it has cost you from time to time for this and that kind of labour, and by holding out advantages to men who are willing to exert themselves, you may, I think, get your work done for less money, and by a more willing staff. Gentlemen, we have no reason to be dissatisfied with the price of fat cattle just now; even little pigs nine weeks old are guinea-pigs; but, although

I think that our local market invariably returns a good price for stock, still we might be advised by telegraph as to the importations, in case we are sending to the London Metropolitan market. It appears to me, that if we bred and fed more stock, we should be less liable to import disease, and that a certain annual sale of cattle reared on the premises, and fed on what we grow, would make us less dependent on the corn crop. With reference to the corn crop, I propose, with your co-operation, to purchase a portion of land near the railway-station, adjacent to the sidings where the trucks could run up to it, and thereon to erect a warehouse for the stowage of wool and corn in accordance with my circular. The frontage would face one of the principal streets, and samples of corn stowed therein could be exhibited. The appointment of

manager could be bestowed on some tenant-farmer, who, from reasons beyond his control, is in want of our support, and, of course, we should keep our own sacks and look after them without the assistance of a sack-hiring co." (At the mention of sack-hiring, Mr. Bull insisted on telling us that last year he hired some sacks. He thought the corn-dealer had returned them, whereas they were lost, and he, Mr. Bull, had to pay for twelve months' hire of the sacks, in addition to two shillings each for their value.) "Gentlemen," continued the Squire, "Mr. Hope has promised to dive into the question of Poor-Law Administration. I hope, before we depart, someone will take up each question, and I ask you to drink success to the County Farmers' Association."

Before we broke up the party, he ap-

pointed a secretary, and I commissioned that gentleman to obtain for me samples of seed, barley, and oats, from a friend of his in another county; because, if you buy of a seed merchant, you usually pay dearly for his judgment, and perhaps the seed only comes off the next farm, and will be no change to your soil.

"The Lion" had been conducting the ladies about in the town; and, having no room in his father's conveyance, we gave him a lift in the van. He had to sit behind, with the flowers and the parcels and the dressmaker.

We passed the Rev. Makepeace's son, Mr. Hugh Makepeace, and the curate again on our homeward journey. His horses were only going walking pace, and one of them very lame indeed. Mr. Davis, the curate, bowed to us, and Mr. Hugh

whipped his lame horse, but it was to no purpose.

In the evening his groom called to know if I would supply his master with hay, straw, and corn, at quarterly account. Of course I shall do it, although I must buy most of the things until harvest. I wish I had twenty such customers. His master wished to know if I would sell the pair of horses, taking his in exchange. I ascertained that he gave one hundred and twenty guineas for them twelve months since; that one of them is a high blower, and the other one has fever in its feet. Said the groom: "That lame horse is only six years old; he would work sound on the land; keep him off the road, and he is a first-rate saddle-horse, quite up to your weight." Now I did not want to sell "Brandy" and "Soda." I might buy

twenty cast army horses and not be so lucky again; but it had so often happened to me, that when I had been offered a large price for an animal and did not sell it, that something happened to it before long; and I consider that a farmer must now and then embrace an opportunity like this to get a fancy price (or say a high price) for some of his animals, to set against accidents and sudden death, which are sure to happen; so I said to the groom: "I am afraid I shall not be able to replace the horses if I sell them; but what do you think your master would be willing to give for them? They would make a high price in a dealer's stable. My son has taken great pains with them. Do you think your master would give a hundred guineas for them?" "Say seventy-five, sir, and take the other two in exchange." Well, I had no objection, and

the seventy-five shillings were to be handed to the groom. My son was to drive the pair up on Monday morning, and he did, and brought the cheque and the other horses back. We didn't dare tell the ladies that "Brandy" and "Soda" had gone until we had cashed the cheque, when I took especial delight in counting out the seventy-five sovereigns on the table.

"There, my dears," I said, "that is tithe money; the proceeds of a 'Brandy' and 'Soda,' to 'make peace.'"

"You don't mean to say you have sold George's beautiful horses!" exclaimed my wife.

"Yes, my dear, and I have got seventy-five pounds by the transaction, taking two horses in exchange. One of them is lame, but we have its shoes off, and bran poultices on, and it will soon be right; and now we

will have a 'flare up' at Farnborough Hall at the parson's expense. He told us that he entertained two hundred and fifty guests out of tithe expenses."

This announcement settled all dispute as to the disposal of "Brandy" and "Soda." The girls rushed to kiss me and then their mamma.

"Won't it be jolly!" they said to the boys.

"We can ask the Aldridges, and the Baylises, and the Hollises, and the Goslings, and all our old friends."

"Yes," said Laura, "and the Hicks, and the Reeves, and the Clacys, and Mrs. Bradbury, and the Farrows."

"I guess you will about fill Farnborough Hall," I said; "but you have forgotten two people. I mean Miss Bull and the curate. I certainly shall ask him to partake of the bounty of his pastor's son."

"But," said my daughter, "Mr. Bull won't allow Mary to go out, I know."

"Leave that to me, my dear." Then, turning to my wife, I asked: "How much money shall we spend at this house-warming of Farnborough Hall?"

"You know best, my dear; but pray don't let the girls ask all the people they have mentioned. We should want professional waiters, cooks, and no end of assistance. Let us confine the party to twenty visitors. Say they cost us ten shillings a-head. Give me ten pounds, my dear; that will be quite enough to start with, and I should think you would give George some of that money for the pains and trouble he has had with 'Brandy' and 'Soda.'"

"Yes, I am going to a large fair to-morrow. I want to buy two Welsh colts

with this money, and the rest I will divide amongst you when I come home. David has to drive two drovers with the mule, and I am going to ride Mr. Makepeace's horse. George has tried him for me. There is no grass yet, and cattle will be sure to go reasonably. I like to buy before there comes a general demand. It is better to put up with the inconvenience than to pay the higher price later on. There is a rough hayrick to cut some chaff with, and the straw is eatable."

I left my family in excellent spirits with the house-warming in view, and with my cheque-book in my pocket I pushed my way into the fair. The first herd which took my eye was a herd of twelve Irish heifers. The owner asked fifteen pounds each for them. I offered him thirteen. He afterwards found me and wished me to

split the difference with him, but he was too late, for I had bought eleven down-calving, good home-bred shorthorn heifers, at seventeen pounds each. I also purchased three cross-bred cows and calves for dairy work, at from twenty to twenty-three pounds, and started one man on the road with the fourteen, with instructions to let them go their own pace, and not hurry them.

Now I can't tell you why it is, but there is no cow so profitable for a dairy cow as a cross-breed, one part in four Jersey, if you can find them; but, there, it is impossible to tell how they are bred. Shorthorn cattle if pure-bred put on flesh instead of giving milk, and the milk of many cows is improved in quality if there is a cross of the Jersey or Alderney in the breed. These cows if pure-bred are

very pretty ornaments for a gentleman's park; but a good cross-bred cow, about half shorthorn, a quarter longhorn, and a quarter Jersey, will make as much butter as two Alderney cows, and not eat much more than half the food.

Then I stepped into the sheep fair, and I was tempted to buy a hundred and ten Hampshire Down ewes, with lambs. The owner asked seventy-five shillings a-couple, and I bought them at seventy-two shillings and sixpence, and started the other man. "Now, David," I said, "for the two Welsh colts." They were in a drove, and the men were rushing in to catch them and drag them out by the halters, frightening them all the while with paper tied on to a long stick and exclamations of:

"Wo, you Welsh rascal!"

"Wo, you money-getting duchess!"

"Wo, you double-pressure steam-engine!"

"Wo, you brook-jumping, steeplechase winner!"

"Wo, you fly-away, telegraphing, lightning mountaineer!" mingled with cries of "Ah!" "Augh!" at the pitch of their voices, and an occasional general cry from all helpers of "Sold again! Sold again!"

After nearly being caught myself several times with the long halter, by which they dragged the unhappy frightened colt until it usually reared and fell backward, I managed to select a couple of growing three-year-old ones, for which I paid forty-five pounds; business having been much impeded, and the colts unnecessarily impressed with a dread of human monsters, by the vendor's mode of procedure. A terrific howl of "Sold again, and got the money!" followed

my handing over the money; and then came the question of how to get the colts home. For an arranged quantity of beer the men undertook to get them out of the town for us, when they tied their halters up and let them loose to follow my horse, whilst David and his mule acted as whippers-up behind. We thus overtook the sheep and the cows, and, although we were last to start, we were the first home at Farnborough Hall, to give orders to John Brown for the reception of our cattle. George was too busy with his steam-engines to attend to anything but the two colts. He is longing, I know, to teach them their business. In the absence of proper herdsmen, David and I have enough to do to direct the labourers we have; and as our steam chaff machinery, and, indeed, all other machinery, is not fixed, I must

borrow a chaff-cutter and get that hay-rick cut into chaff with a steam-engine. We can put it into a barn and mix it with malt-dust, bran, and such-like, as we require it. The Squire has given me an immense heap of dry elm sawdust which he wanted cleared away from his saw-mill, and I would rather use that for shed-bedding for cattle than straw. Deal sawdust is not so useful, although equally healthy, if not more so; for the pitchy nature of the wood is destructive to vegetation until the manure has lain and rotted. It does not hurt so much as a top-dressing for meadows, in which case the rain washes all manure particles to the root, and leaves the wood to rot at its leisure. If we can manage until May the 1st, Dr. Green will appear and relieve us of all anxiety in the matter. John

Brown thinks with me that as the weather is so exceptionally fine, and the cultivator is here, we may venture to clean the three fields which we intend to lay down as grass; so that will be George's next undertaking.

My wife soon reminded me of my promise to make the children a present over the sale of "Brandy" and "Soda." (I sha'n't forget how the curate laughed when we told him the names of the horses, and he remarked that they were excellent names, for they go so well together.) She soon broached the subject.

"Ah, well, my dear," I said, "the fact is, I don't like to part with the parson's money, it handles so nice and genuine. You should have seen the Welsh horse-dealer look at the little goldfinches when I pulled 'em out. I believe I got the

colts quite five pounds cheaper by showing him the 'mopuses.' They were the best colts in his drove, and I do like to put my hand into my breeches-pocket and just feel what's left of the pieces."

"They will do preaching."

"They will do murder."

"They will do love."

"Ay, and they will do lawyers, and that's why I like them best; but there, I will be as good as my word. The girls shall have a new dress each for the housewarming, and the boys—what shall I give the boys for training 'Brandy' and 'Soda?'"

"Oh, thank you, thank you. You are a dear papa," said the girls.

"Wait a minute," I said; "I haven't settled about the boys. Oh, I know what I will give them. I see there are seven

lame ewes among my new flock. You boys can take them and their lambs and put them into your warren, and I needn't tell you how to pare their feet and dress them with foot-rot mixture, because you know all about it. Will that satisfy you?"

"Oh yes," said both at once; and David commenced to tell us that George and he had agreed to invest in three cows and calves. They were going to take a half-witted lad out of the workhouse and give him seven shillings a-week to mind the cows round the roads from the farm to the warren, and then to cut the grass round the hedgerows to feed them on in the yard at night.

"Don't you see, father, the police can't interfere with us if we keep the cows moving, because they will be always

moving either to the warren or to the farm."

"Quite right, boys; quite right," I said. "It is a shame that the beautiful clover-grass alongside the roads should be allowed to rot because we are not allowed to feed it. We have all the road to repair, and don't dare feed off it. The wind blows the manure from the road into the bank, and when rain comes the grass always grows there long before it grows in the meadows. You are welcome to cut all my hedgerows and stop the weeds from going to seed, and as to the policeman stopping you, I'll manage him. I have promised him a couple of rabbits. Likely thing, indeed, that we are to keep the roads in order and then not have the grass. And to keep policemen, too, to prevent us getting a living. The fact is,

we are overlawed in England at every point. We manufacture scourges for each other's backs, until they are beyond the limits of endurance; but you go ahead, boys, and, when the sheep are well, run them along the road with the cows. I will see all about the policeman and the overseer. And get that 'Silly Jim' out of the workhouse by all means. He will be one off the rates, and his mother told me she would rather have him at home if he could be employed."

Our sheep are penned on a piece of land that we have cleaned. They are some distance from home, but the field is nicely sheltered by the woods, and the little lambs run in the wood, and enjoy themselves by playing and picking the primroses and grass in sheltered spots. I do like to fold-pen the ground with sheep for oats,

and you can see to an inch almost where the hurdles were fixed, or where you leave off.

There is a wild-beast show in the village to-night, and I can hear the lions growl as plain as plain can be. I think we shall have rain before morning.

I have no end of business before me. Horses to buy, farm sales to attend (to pick up good implements), and I must try and buy a hayrick and some straw from Mr. Bull, for I see he has some to spare and no cattle to eat it. His lease forbids his selling either hay or straw, but I have seen the Squire about it, and he has written Mr. Bull to the effect that as it is to be consumed on the estate he will not object to his disposing of it to me for that purpose. How thankful I am that our landlord is not an absentee! An application

of this kind made to the agent of an absentee landlord would be followed with this kind of letter:

"SIR,—We beg to acknowledge receipt of your communication requesting permission to break one of the covenants of your lease. We follow you as to your view of the advantages to be derived from the transaction, but we are unable to sanction the establishment of such a dangerous precedent.—We beg to remain your obedient servants,

"pro Dunn and Scalem,

"I. SHERRIFF."

Mr. Bull has requested me to let my cart bring some seed home for him. I will take it up myself.

His daughter has been here a good deal

lately to give lessons in butter-making, and the girls have been giving her dancing lessons. They have been having such fun, and positively the dressmaker has measured her for a white muslin dress, and all this unknown to her father, who wouldn't have her learn dancing, or go to a party, if he knew it. But I must manage the matter with Mr. Bull, as I undertook to do it.

"Sorry you should have took the trouble to bring the seed yourself," said Mr. Bull. "I could have sent for it, Mr. Hope. Yes; I've got the Squire's letter, and, for the matter of my wanting the hay and straw myself, I can sell you two ricks of hay and one of straw, for I be rather short of cow stock, and they be such a price. I wish I had weaned a few calves myself, as things go."

"I shall be wanting some calves, Mr.

Bull. Is there a calf-dealer living about here?"

"Oh yes; there's Joe Chamberlain, three miles from here. He buys all the calves round here. It is his day at home. You will be sure to catch him in, if you go to-day."

I had rather a strong deal with Mr. Bull, and the old man polished his spectacles, and called for cider as I sat down to write the cheque.

"Mr. Bull," I said, "I have a favour to ask you."

"What may it be, sir?"

"I have a few friends coming to see me, and I should be delighted if you and your daughter would join us."

"No, I thank you, sir. Never goes to no parties, no more shall my daughter. Thank you all the same."

"Can't you put the rule by for once Mr. Bull?"

"No, sir, thank you; we are getting on very well as neighbours. Let well alone. My daughter has been away too much to please me lately, and I tell her that it's pretty near time she had finished that butter-making lesson. She is like all the rest of them, fond of gadding about, I fear; though she is a good gal. There, don't cry, my dear, I didn't mean nothing, only it's dull here all alone for me."

"Then why don't you come with her, Mr. Bull?"

"Me! What! leave the farm to take care of itself? 'Spose there should be a fire, or 'spose that lion what's got out of the 'nargerie should come here, what then?"

"Lion escaped!" I exclaimed.

"Oh yes. They says as he flew at the black man what was showing him last night, and knocked him down and tore his shoulder awful, and one of the keepers went in with a red-hot iron to knock the lion off, and that the lion jumped bang out amongst the people and took his hook, and he is about somewhere. Up in your woods, I shouldn't wonder!"

"You are joking, Mr. Bull," I said.

"No, I bain't, 'pon my honour. That's the news my man brought this morning, and there stands my old blunderbuss loaded, ready for him if he comes here."

"Then we shall have a little excitement, Mr. Bull," I said, "even if we don't get the lion in reality. Are not the owners of the menagerie in quest of it?"

"Oh no. They be gone on without him. They says 'twill be more than he is worth

to follow him, and goodness knows what mischief they may be called on to pay for."

"Hah! hah! hah!" I laughed. "This is a joke, Mr. Bull, but let us finish our business. Now, look here, my girls are not perfect in the butter-making. I want to put things very nicely on the table for a few old friends, and if you will allow your daughter just to come down and put them straight, then they must get on without her afterwards, and as this lion is at large, she shall sleep at Farnborough Hall. Here, give me the pen, Mr. Bull, and I will write you the cheque, and remember that her coming to help us is a part of the bargain."

"Well," said Mr. Bull, "if it's only to help serve up, and such like, just to ease your young ladies, I don't mind this once;

but mind, it must be the last time, and there isn't another mortal man or beggar boy besides you, Mr. Hope, to whom I'd trust her. You hears that, don't you?"

"Thank you, father dear," said Mary Bull, and she wiped the tear-drops from her cheek, and kissed the old man, and smilingly handed me a glass of cider.

How I do like to see young folk made happy. God bless them! If they don't enjoy themselves when they are young, how do we know that they will ever have the opportunity? There was this pretty girl sitting there with visions of a new muslin dress (for I know she had tried it on), and a romp, and all sorts of fun, her fate hanging on "Yes" or "No" from her father. If we did deceive the old man a little, I think you will agree with me that it was excusable under the circumstances.

I left her happy with the prospect of the party, and Mr. Bull ordered his pony to take my cheque up to the Squire, for I know he is a bit behind with the rent, and this will put him about straight.

Covenants removed, rent paid, you see, and provender turned into manure for the land by a judicious arrangement.

Joe Chamberlain was busy with what I call a "Wootton Bassett Band," that is, a number of calves. The music of it is memorable to me from a railway-porter once telling me that, his station-master having fined him, he had his revenge by shunting a truck-load of calves to the siding under the station-master's window, and leaving them there all night. There was no engine to shunt the trucks, until the train came up in the morning to take the calves on to their station of destination,

and the station-master was seen opening the window and raving at the calves at intervals during the night, but to no purpose, for they only bawled the more.

Joe Chamberlain was keeping his calves alive by pouring bottles of gruel down their throats, whilst they kicked and fought in opposition to the arrangement. How those poor calves cried for their mothers! It was useless my trying to make Chamberlain hear, for there being no chairman of the meeting, the members were all trying to speak at once. Some had nearly lost their voices in the house, whilst a group of strong Irish calves completely drowned the voices of our home-bred ones.

Mr. Chamberlain motioned to me to go into his house. I waited in the lobby for him, and having told his wife to send

Lawson, he gave him the bottle and told him to finish gruelling them.

"You seem to have a noisy family," I remarked.

"Yes, sir, and those Irish calves are that awkward I can't tackle them. You see, they have been running with their mothers, and they don't know what they want; but I've got a capital man in Lawson. He can gruel them."

"Do you find sale for so many calves round this part?" I inquired.

"Oh dear no, sir; I buy them all round here and send them to Birmingham to kill. You are Mr. Hope, I think. I was coming to ask you to sell me your calves. I shall be happy to wait on you. I send from eight to ten truck-loads to Birmingham every week."

"I'm a buyer, not a seller," I remarked.

"I want to know if you can supply me with some well-bred shorthorn calves of a good roan colour at a short notice?"

"Any number, and any when, sir."

"And at what price?"

"Say from two pounds to three pounds five, sir. You see, I sell 'em by weight, not age. A good heavy calf, if he is only three days old, is more value to me than an old calf if he hasn't much flesh on him."

"And do the Birmingham people eat such young veal as calves three days old?" I inquired.

"Well, sir, I daresay they mostly get on for a week old before they are killed, but I like to buy them a month old if I can get people to keep them, but the farmers want the milk, and the sooner the calves are gone the better they like it."

"How many truck-loads go into Birmingham weekly?" I inquired.

"No idea, sir, but from all parts, I believe. They be very fond of veal pies and such like, must have something cheap, don't you know; but, bless you! they make excellent tender pies. I had a veal pie at a refreshment room at the station the other day, fourpence they charged me, and I said to my man: 'This is very likely some of our'n, Bill.' But it seems most a pity that nearly all our good home-bred calves should be made into pies, and then that we should have to import all sorts of diseased foreigners to fill up their places. I wish more farmers would take to weaning, but I suppose it's too much trouble nowadays."

I concluded arrangements with Joe Chamberlain, the calfmonger, and, having

picked out four of the best calves I ever bought in my life, I left the others bound for Birmingham, to disturb, maybe, the slumbers of many railway officials on their cruel journey.

CHAPTER III.

FROM every window in Farnborough Hall, save the attic window, shines forth the light. The old house is itself again. Even the attic window is repaired, and should old Golding's ghost think proper to honour our feast with his presence, or should Mrs. Golding arrive in her churchyard robe, they will have to break the glass of the window, in accordance with the legend.

Of all our guests Mary Bull is the most attractive. Clad in a white muslin dress, trimmed with pink, and a pink camellia in her hair, I could not resist the temptation of

asking her for a kiss. How I wish her father could see her making the young men's hearts go pit-pat instead of patting up the butter. She dances nicely, too, and our boys and Mr. Lionel have a monopoly of her favours. The number of our guests has grown from twenty to thirty, and you should see the curate waltz. The Squire has sent us some fruit and flowers, and if he hadn't been obliged to go away I really think he meant to come and have a romp himself. I have just got through a set of quadrilles with Mrs. Aldridge, vis-à-vis with Mr. Aldridge and my wife, and I never spent a happier evening in my life. So nice to see one's family growing up and all pulling together in unity as ours do. The Lancers, I see, next. Now I can't get through the Lancers, so I will go and see that the men are all provided for, and that

the supper is laid. The men are all in the brewhouse, and, as they can manage without the underkeeper, I have told him just to walk up and see that the sheep are all right, for the people persist in saying that the menagerie lion is still at large; although, of course, I believe it is all nonsense.

We have finished supper, and the young folks have gone on with the dancing whilst the "old fogies" play a quiet rubber. It is positively two o'clock, and we are all grouped round the fire.

"Indian corn," I said to Mr. Aldridge; "we could grow it in hot seasons. Fanny my dear, just run up into the attic and bring me down those stalks of Indian corn that I grew in the garden last year."

The dear girl tripped off as light as a feather. I followed her to the stairs and waited for her return. In a moment I heard

her utter the most piercing cry. I hurried up to the spot; she pointed to the attic window, and, exclaiming, "The Ghost! the Ghost!" she fell fainting into my arms.

Her sisters came to the rescue. We examined the attic window. The glass was broken into fragments.

"The keeper wants you. Come directly, father," called David. "The sheep are all out, and there are three lambs dead in the fold."

"Oh master! master!" shouted John Brown, "the lion has just jumped over the yard gate! What shall us do?"

"Boys!" I shouted at the top of my voice, "get your guns, and bring me mine, and some cartridges."

The appearance of two such unexpected guests as a lion and a ghost at our festival created quite a consternation amongst our

party. Lucy, my wife, was the first to come forward to take an active part in endeavouring to allay their fears.

"What nonsense!" she exclaimed. "There are no such things as ghosts, and if there is a lion at Farnborough Hall you have your father here to protect you. If anyone is afraid to face it, let me lead the way."

"Lucy, Lucy," I replied, "it is not a woman's place to fight lions, although I know that where danger or sickness appear you have never flinched from your duty. Remember, my dear, that I have the boys who inherit your spirit to go with me. Do the best you can with these people, for we have not a moment to lose."

Here the curate stepped forward and asked if he might take charge of the ladies whilst we searched for the lion.

"By all means," I replied. "You are

the very person to deal with a ghost. Catch him if you can."

"Mr. Hope, Mr. Hope, can I have your yeomanry sword?" shouted Mr. Lionel Douglas Aldridge.

"By all means, my lad. It hangs over the kitchen mantelpiece. Are you coming with us?"

"Yes; wait a minute whilst I change my pumps."

It was only on his saying this that we all discovered we were going lion-hunting in dancing-pumps, and, despite the supposed presence of the lion outside, we all indulged in a hearty laugh.

"Don't laugh so heartily, boys," I said, "or you will disturb the lion," for in my mind it now became a matter of certainty that the lion had escaped from the menagerie, that the owners had gone on

without him, and that he was at large at Farnborough Hall. The evidence of the underkeeper confirmed the matter; my lambs were lying dead in the field, and John Brown had seen the brute jump over the yard gate.

We were not long in changing our boots, and then myself, my two sons, Mr. Aldridge, jun., and the underkeeper, quietly emerged from the front door, weapons in hand.

"Master," called John Brown, "shall I let 'Keneally' loose?"

"Keneally," I must tell you, is our yard dog. He is a cross between an English bulldog and an Irish retriever—about the ugliest animal you ever saw; such a head, and such a lot of wiry hair; but he is the dog to put the pigs in, or to tackle a bull. He once saved my life when one of my

bulls attacked me. And let me tell you that a bull is never safe; but if you have a good dog with you, you need never fear, because the dog will bite the bull if he attacks you, and so take up the battle, on his own account, until you can get away. Those Alderney bulls are the worst. You may breed them up yourself and pet them, but the first time they feel offended they will pin you.

"No, John," I replied, "let us go and take 'Keneally' to the place where you saw the lion jump over. I can hear him tearing at his chain. He only wants to be at the lion. There's no doubt about it, boys. We must follow 'Keneally,' and mind, don't forget the old song when we come up to the lion, 'Steady, Boys, Steady.' Hit him just behind the near shoulder, and reserve your second barrel for close

quarters; for a wounded lion is a rum chap, I expect. Take his collar and chain off, George," I said, "and incite him a bit before you let him go. Seize him, old chap; give it him. That's the place, is it, John? Let him go, boys. He smells him."

By George! he has got the scent, and away he went, down the lane and over two meadows, until we came to a brook.

My breath soon became very short, and I was falling behind. I just heard David call to Mr. Aldridge to stay and look after me, as I saw my boys and the keeper clear the brook with their guns in hand, and the light of the moon enabled me to discern "Keneally" running in front of them with his head down, and going in the direction of the nearest village.

"Can't run as I used to," said I, as soon

as my breath would allow my doing so; "as to jumping that ditch, why I should get stuck in the mud. But don't trouble about me, Mr. Aldridge, if you have a mind to go on."

"I shall stick by you, Mr. Hope."

We listened for some time, but all sound of "Keneally" or the boys had vanished.

"It is no good our waiting here," I replied. "Goodness knows where they have all gone. Better go and look after the sheep."

We called at Farnborough Hall for the men. The curate answered the door, and I found that Lucy had hunted out an old blunderbuss, and that Mr. Aldridge, sen., had loaded it for their mutual protection; but, it not having been fired off for some years, I had my doubts as to the safety of the experiment. Not one of the party had

ventured to drive home, for fear of being attacked on the wayside by the lion; and we mustered a strong party to go in search of the sheep. Two farm servants armed themselves with pitchforks, and old John carried a half-worn birch-broom dipped in tar.

"What's that broom for, John?" I inquired, for it was now daylight.

"If the lion comes at me, master," said John, "I mean to ram it down his throat. I'll back he won't want a second bite. I sarved an old boar so once, and he never troubled me after."

We found the poor ewes and lambs huddled in a corner of the wood, and the hurdles knocked down. After collecting the dead lambs and leaving two men in charge of the sheep, we returned to Farnborough Hall. Mr. Aldridge gave

one of the men the blunderbuss, and I gave him particular instructions not to fire it off unless the lion was about to swallow him: "For," said I, "I don't know whether it is not as likely to kill the party firing as the party fired at."

The boys and the keeper had just returned from a fruitless search for the lion. "Keneally" lost the scent at a wider brook, which they were unable to cross, and there was nothing to be done but to wait patiently for the reappearance of the ghost and the lion.

My Fanny looked very pale at the breakfast-table, and Jemima, the servant, looked anxiously behind her, as if she fully expected the ghost to walk in at every creak of the door.

"It is really a very remarkable

occurrence," observed the curate. "The attic window is completely broken, and Miss Aldridge says Fanny clearly distinguished the staring eyes and the white robe of the apparition."

"Very many things appear strange until they are accounted for," remarked my wife. "I always imagined that this story about Golding, the miser, had no foundation; but now the ghost has appeared, I feel sure that my husband will not rest until he has unravelled the mystery. I shall have no objection to sleep with him in the attic until the ghost reappears."

"Well done, Lucy!" I said. "You always had a nerve, and a good one. Suppose we let the ghost have one night's rest and then I am at your service. But how about the lion and the sheep? The

lion will be hungry again to-night, and now he has tasted lamb he won't be satisfied until he has cleared the flock."

"Then you take the ghost, and we will take the lion, father!" exclaimed the boys. "We are going to watch in the sheep-house to-night."

"As you wish, boys; but you must get some rest, or we shall be finding your bones, if the lion catches you asleep."

All our guests remained to breakfast, and when Farmer Bull drove up in a great fluster for his daughter, he found her very busy helping the girls with the clearing-away process.

"There, come along, do," said the old man, who was visibly trembling, "and never no more do I let you go out like this. 'Tis a wonder you ain't been eaten up with that lion."

My wife tried to make friends with him, but to no purpose, and poor Mary had to bundle up her things and hurry to his gig.

"You are terribly afraid of losing your daughter," I said to Mr. Bull.

"I be only sorry as I let her come, Mr. Hope; and when I heard about your sheep being killed this morning, I says: 'There, that comes of doing what I knew was wrong.' But I dare say you meant it all for kindness, Mr. Hope. Now jump up, Mary, and if ever I worry myself again as I did all last night, you forgive me. I only hope we shall get home safe, for we can't tell where that lion is now. You drive, Mary, and I'll hold the gun," said Farmer Bull, as he started for his home.

Bed was out of the question that day, as I was planting forty acres of peas. I

think I told you that the weather had been so favourable for our steam cultivating, that I had been enabled to clean all the land not under crop. I had already planted the usual quantity of oats and barley, leaving a considerable acreage for roots of all kinds. In the ordinary way, this land would lie fallow until the usual time for sowing mangels, swedes, and turnips. The mangels I usually sow on the 1st of May, my swedes on the 1st of June, and my turnips the first week in July. If I have a good crop of roots, I shall want another good flock of sheep, and I don't see why the earth should not produce the sheep for me. That is to say, I can obtain a crop of peas off the land which I intend for turnips, before I sow the turnips. Then I can sell the peas and buy some sheep, instead of letting the land lie idle, and

being compelled to sell my railway shares to buy the sheep; all this, of course, weather permitting, etc.; for come whatever weather will, it is impossible for such weather to come that it will suit the whole of the farmer's crop. If it is too rainy, he cannot make his hay, and if it is too dry, he cannot grow his roots to advantage. His wheat crop can do without much rain. His barley crop requires showers. His sheep don't like wet weather. His meadows do. His swedes will be affected with mildew, and his turnips will rot; whilst his mangels will grow to an enormous size. I think that this peculiarity accounts in a great measure for the English farmer bearing the character of a grumbler; and if, indeed, he waits for the season to come when he shall have nothing to grumble at, he will have to wait for the time when he

has fine weather in one field for hay-making, and rain in the next field for the growing crop.

"Why, we shan't know the old farm presently!" said the Squire, as he came, unawares, up to me as I was walking behind the drill. "Dear me! how you jumped! Did you think I was the lion that we have come to look for? Here is Captain Stephens, an old friend of mine, who has shot several lions abroad, and he offers his services to rid you of the monster. Can you direct us as to his whereabouts?"

"Why, no, sir; but here comes the underkeeper, who followed him as far as possible last night."

"I have seen him," said the Squire, "and I took the liberty of sending him for your dog. We are going to beat the woods for him."

"Then, Sir Hugh, I must ask you to keep that retriever dog of yours in a string, for the pheasants are just nesting. If you let 'Keneally' just run through, he will find him if he is there, and he won't follow anything but a hare, or a badger, if there is one."

"All right, Hope. We won't disturb your pheasants until the 1st of October; but we shall drop in at Farnborough Hall, and tell you how we get on. If you hear us fire, bring the cart up for the lion. Captain Stephens never misses."

Sir Hugh Power and Captain Stephens called at the Hall, and stayed for a chat.

"I heartily wish I had dropped in upon you last night," said the Squire, "for my journey was a fruitless one, and there certainly would have been some fun in

hunting ghosts and lions by moonlight; eh, Stephens?"

The day passed, and the next night, without tidings of the lion. My neighbours sent me some lambs, from their twin couples, to make good my loss, and we fastened the mothers with their necks between two stakes in little pens, by themselves, until they should adopt their foster lambkins, and thus earn their liberty of action in common with the other ewes.

The boys returned from the sheep-house, in which they had been watching all night, cold, hungry, and disappointed.

"I'll alter that wretched old sheep-house before night," said George, "and fit her up with a stove, for there is no knowing how long we may have to watch; besides, it will be much better for the shepherd to

have a stove. He can't be of much assistance to the sheep if he comes out starved with the cold."

The following night I had agreed to watch for the ghost. Determined to see how Mrs. Golding was, should she pay me a visit, I got George and David to line the window with wire. I had the glass mended, and with a wire-string attached to the window, my gun by my side, and my pipe and glass on a box hard by, I confess I was "old stupid" enough to watch for the appearance of the ghost.

Lucy would have sat up there with me had I not forbidden her so doing, but none of my family would go to bed, and Jemima begged to sit up with them. So, what with the lion and the ghost, we were all on night duty at Farnborough Hall.

Fanny wanted me to have one of the

farm men with me, but I declined any assistance in the matter. However, I knew there would be no rest for the girls until this singular apparition had been accounted for, and somewhat doggedly I took my seat in the attic of Farnborough Hall, as the clock struck twelve.

The window with its wire casement was open: I did not close it, but I sat in an old armchair, which had belonged to my grandfather, and listened to the rattle of the night trains.

I confess I had taken an extra glass, and I had smoked two or three times my usual quantity of tobacco; perhaps it was excusable under the circumstances. Ghost-hunting is not a very lively occupation; and, despite my wish to make terms with Mrs. Golding, I fell asleep in my grandfather's chair, in the attic at Farnborough

Hall, with the wire which was attached to the window-fastening bound round my hand.

I dreamt of hunting lions and tigers, and of terrific encounters with some of them. I dreamt of giving evidence in the House of Commons as to railway rates. I dreamt that bishops' salaries were revised and tithes reorganised. And then I dreamt that old Golding appeared to me in a vision in the very attic in which I unconsciously sat.

"Mark Hope," said he, "I buried my ten talents whilst on earth, for I had the means to be charitable and good. I turned the beggar from my door, and I saw my neighbour and his children want. I worshipped only gold and those who owned it. Go now to that chimney, and you will find bags of gold. Give to the poor, help

the industrious, reward the virtuous, and raise the fallen, for I am lost."

As he said this, something struck me on my forehead, and I awoke with a bound, a chain rattled, I overbalanced, and I fell heavily on the floor.

I tried to scramble up, but I found my wrist tied to the window, which closed with a bang. I knew not where I was, or what I was doing.

"Oh pa! oh pa! what is it?" exclaimed my daughters, at the foot of the stairs.

"Give me the light, Laura," said my wife, and, fearless, my Lucy came to my rescue.

I then saw it all, and laughed! Laugh is no name for it. I nearly killed myself laughing.

Fluttering at the closed window, was a barn owl. Lucy held the wire tight whilst

I caught it, and to its leg was fastened a horse's chain bridle-curb.

"Poor, miserable, starved farmer's friend," I said as I secured it; "so they have made a ghost of you, and someone has tried to chain you up, I see; but come down with us, and tell us all about old Golding and his wife, and we will take your chain off, and remove the wire from the attic window, that so long as Mark Hope lives at Farnborough Hall you and your family may have free admission and a hearty welcome."

The girls kissed the poor owl, but it pecked Fanny on the nose, as if to reprove her for its capture, and when the boys came home from another fruitless night's watching for the lion, David pushed a large field-mouse down its throat, which the owl first refused to admit, and

then afterwards swallowed with evident relish.

"As poor as an owl" is an old saying, and one that is not without point, for the owl we had caught was as light as a bunch of feathers, and its breast-bone was covered only with the skin. It could not see to fly about in the daytime, despite its large shining eyes, so we agreed to put it back in the attic, in the spot where in my dream I had been directed to go for the bags of gold.

My Fanny was now the first to enter the attic.

"I will find the money," she said, as she tripped by me to the chimney. "Oh pa!" she exclaimed, "here are some funny-looking things; what are they?"

They were four young owls, crouched in the corner; such fusty, yellow, feather-

less, callow little frights, deprived, no doubt, of their supper by this stupid ghost tale. We placed their blinking old parent by their side, and, taking the window off its hinges to give free ingress to the parent owls, I descended to tell the gamekeeper, who was having his breakfast in the kitchen, for he had been watching all night with the boys, never to shoot an owl on my farm. They destroy field and barn mice, and, although their existence among birds is as meagre as that of a seamstress compared with that of her employers, still every stitch she sets in the night air is for the protection of those who usually persecute and undervalue their services.

Thus ended the ghost tale, but the boys made quite a joke of my going to sleep and being aroused by the chain which dangled

from the leg of the owl. Indeed, how that poor bird could have sat on her eggs, and hatched them, without the chain breaking the eggs, was a mystery; but maybe it was the male bird we caught.

"You are welcome to laugh, my boys," I said, "but I want to see you bring that lion home, and thus rid us of another trouble."

"Well, father," said David, "I should think it was about time the lion was hungry again. It is now three days since he had a gorge. I shouldn't wonder if he comes to-night. I'm nearly tired of sitting up for him."

George had but little sleep that day. He was obliged to go and see after the Squire's steam-tackle, and to set it to work on another tenant's farm. After sunset they started as usual, and took "Keneally" with them.

At daybreak I suddenly awoke from my slumbers and heard a sound of firearms. Jumping up in the bed, I said, "Lucy, what's that?"

"It's the boys, Mark," she replied. "Jump up and help them. Oh! I do hope they won't wound that lion and get too near him. I know how venturesome they are. Take some brandy and some linen in case—— I'll get it whilst you dress. Make haste, Mark!"

Whilst I was shuffling on my things, Lucy opened the window and peered into the twilight. Bang went a gun, which I could swear was that of David; and then I heard a deep growl, and the keeper's voice rang out:

"Don't shoot, or you will kill 'Keneally!'" and then all was silent.

I hastened down, but could neither

hear nor see anything. That they had found the lion, and that he was at bay before now, was certain; but in which direction or how far from Farnborough Hall by this time it was impossible for me to tell.

My wife soon joined me, and inquired if I could find them.

"No," I said, "I can't tell where they are. They must have passed the farm close by our bedroom window, or we couldn't have heard them so plainly."

The clock struck four as I spoke, and the head carter appeared to commence feeding his horses.

I will have my horses fed two hours before they go to work.

The carter had neither seen nor heard anything of the chase, so it was evident they had not gone in his direction.

"Depend upon it," said my wife, "the lion has gone the same way he went before. Take the carter with you and go that way."

I followed her direction, but we could see nothing of them, and we returned none the wiser. The whole household were astir on our return, and hot water and anxious mother and sisters awaited the return of the boys.

"Here they come!" I exclaimed, as George, David, and the keeper appeared. "All alive anyway, but no lion. They have had a strongish battle though, for old 'Keneally' is as lame as a cat, and his tongue hanging out. Well, boys, where's the lion?" were my first words.

"Dead! dead! dead!" repeated the three lion-hunters.

"Bravo! bravo!" I shouted. "Come

along in and have some breakfast, and tell us all about it. Is anybody wounded?"

"Nobody but 'Keneally.'"

"Then bring the old dog in, and let your mother plaister him, for she has got it all ready—smelling salts and all."

Poor old "Keneally" was torn in several places, but my wife bandaged him up, and, when the breakfast had been disposed of, we sat round a jolly wood fire, and George told us all about the lion hunt.

"Well, father, and all of you, you must know we were sitting round the stove fire in the sheep-house and talking about our rabbits, and hoping the lion wouldn't visit our few sheep in the warren, when we heard the sheep-bells begin to rattle. 'Keneally' looked up and would have barked, but I gave him a pat and pushed

him down. I looked out of the window, and could just see something in the distance, and the sheep all running towards us. 'Splendid!' I said to David; 'he's here, and coming this way. Wake the keeper. Let me have first poke at him, and, when I have fired, you jump out with "Keneally," and follow up, whilst I load again.' Oh! it was grand, and I clutched my old gun until she seemed part of myself. He stood for some time looking at the sheep, all huddled in our corner, and then flourishing his tail he dashed down at them. He came straight for me, and I couldn't get a side view, but when he got within about forty yards, I let him have it—bang! bang! and over he rolled with such a growl. I made sure I had killed him, but when I got out of the sheep-house he had picked him-

self up and was off like a race-horse. 'Keneally' ran him over the hill and down to the farm, and there we overtook him. 'Keneally' had been having a terrific fight with him, and he had only just got away from the dog. David let him have a broadsider at about thirty-five yards, and I was just going to fire when 'Keneally' got hold of him again, and they both rolled into the water. In the water he was best man, and he got out before 'Keneally,' and led us across two meadows to the highroad, and then up to the village; and I declare I could have sworn it was a lion we were following all the time."

"And wasn't it a lion?" I inquired, in great surprise.

"No; it was Miss Smith's Newfoundland dog—that immense yellow one."

"He isn't a thoroughbred Newfoundland," observed the keeper. "He has a cross of the Scotch sheep-dog in him, and they are the worst out, if they take to sheep-killing. However, he won't hunt any more sheep, for he only just managed to crawl into his kennel and drop dead."

"Did you call Miss Smith up?"

"Oh yes, and a nice dressing down she gave us. She threatened to send for the police, and to lock us up as burglars, and I don't know what beside. We wanted to bring the dog away, but she defied us to touch it, so we found the village policeman, and made him go and examine the dog, and old 'Keneally' dragged him out of the kennel and shook him. Didn't you, old man?" said George, as he patted our dog. "The policeman says that having brought it home to Miss Smith, you can

sue her for the previous damage, and that a jury will be sure to make her pay."

"And sue her I will, if she will not settle the matter quietly; for what can such people want with great dogs to annoy, and to injure other people's property? There is a proper place and a proper occupation for a dog, the same as for anything else."

Mr. Aldridge, sen., called to congratulate us on our discovery of the lion. It transpired that the dog was named "Lion" from his similarity to the king of beasts; therefore it was no hoax after all—we had killed a lion.

Mr. Aldridge took a walk with me round the farm, and expressed his surprise at the improved appearance of the land. Said he: "It is marvellous to think you can have cleaned two-thirds of your land and got a

large portion under crop in the time. Your barley and oats are looking well, and with no rent to pay for the first year, it will give you a good start."

"Ah my friend!" I replied, "my success so far has been owing to my meeting with a sensible landlord, the weather, steam-power, and your neighbourly assistance. Really, the spring of 1881 seems to say to the English farmer: 'I have come to atone for bad weather of late, and to give you all a chance to rid your land of weeds and to start again.'"

"But what about your neighbour, Mr. Hope? he doesn't seem to have cleaned his land."

"Why, poor Mr. Bull belongs to the old school. He does not intend to alter his pace to meet the requirements of the age.

Bad times have weakened him at every point. He has scarcely any cattle; his horses are starved; his land is poor; his labourers are all aged, and his energy has gone. I tried to persuade him to clean that large field with the steam-tackle, and I told him that the Squire would not ask him for the money until harvest-time—different from those steam-tackle owners, who are after you for the cheque the very next market-day. But no, he is dead against it, and I am sure he cannot possibly get the land ready for roots this year; besides, we may have showery weather. Mr. Bull must go his own way, and indeed he does not appreciate any hints of the kind. The last time I spoke to him about it, he replied: 'You do as you like, Mr. Hope, and I'll do the same. I've seen six new tenants at

Farnborough Hall since I've been here!' So I shall leave the old gentleman to himself for the future."

"The nights are cold, and we want rain." remarked Mr. Aldridge. "I am afraid that the grass crop will be short, but your clover looks well. What have you done to it?"

"A little artificial just before the last rain, and we kept the hares off it."

"I remember," said Mr. Aldridge, "once subscribing to a work written by a brokendown farmer, which was to teach us the secrets of farming. I paid my guinea and received my book, and once when the hares were gnawing my swedes I turned to the book, as I had noticed directions therein as to keeping the hares off, and how do you think I was directed to do it?"

"Can't say at all."

"Your lion hunt reminds me. I was to tie a bullseye lanthorn to the chest of a Newfoundland dog and take him to the field after dark to chase the hares. The author said that after my doing this several nights the hares would grow so timid of a light that the farmer need only flash a lamp over the field at night, and the hares would all escape."

"Then," I replied, "he might have a sort of railway signal, and turn it from his bedroom with a wire and one of Saxby's patent gear."

"Just so, but I should be satisfied if I could make the author come and walk round my swede field in the dead of the winter as a punishment for writing such trash. Mr. Bright and others complain that farmers don't read books, and I think it is no wonder, when one has a glance at

some of the theoretical nonsense that has been published in the shape of farm literature. A farmer reads on until he comes to something equally ridiculous, and then down he throws the book and never picks it up again. That is my opinion as to why farmers don't read books. Then again, look at these Agricultural Colleges. Did you ever know an Agricultural College farm which paid its expenses? or can you point out a thriving English farmer who obtained his tuition at an Agricultural College? I don't know of one."

"Nor I, but I know of several ploughmen who have started without a penny and are now farming considerable tracts of land."

"Just so, Mr. Hope; and it is their steady perseverance that has done it, and their indoor expenses having been so small.

The old story of the hare and the tortoise."

"Now, Mr. Aldridge, there you and I disagree. I say there were two tortoises, one at one end of the furrow and one at the other, and they were so much alike that the hare did not know the one from the other. When the hare ran up to the top of the field, No. 2 tortoise was already there, and before she got back again, No. 1 tortoise popped by the winning-post, like an old jockey of my acquaintance who rode a heavy steeplechase in foggy weather. He rode last, and popped behind a hay-rick until they came round the second time, and then overtook them and won in a canter. Anyway we have two tortoises at plough over yonder, one at one end of the furrow and one at the other; and the work your boy George has done

with them since they came up is marvellous. I wish they could make better work with the clover, by ploughing with those steam-engines. What a help that would be to us.

"Here comes David. I sent him up to see Miss Smith about the damage her dog has done to my lambs. Well, David, and what does the lady say?"

"She refuses to pay anything, and is going to sue us for fifty pounds, the value of her dog."

"Now, Mr. Hope," said my neighbour, "I will bring this matter before our next County Farmers' Association meeting. This is a case which we as a body must take up on the ground of common interest; and, beyond your share in the subscription, without expense to you individually. Many a farmer is afraid to fight for his own, for fear of losing his case, but a

letter from our County Association will probably bring this good lady to her senses. Railway companies keep a whole set of lawyers of their own, and contract with them, leaving them the chance of getting what they can out of the unhappy defendants. If they attack us, we have some miserable country town lawyer to act in opposition to Messrs. Old, Oak, and Vinegar, of Chancery Lane, whose practice is enormous, and experience ditto. We must keep a bulldog as well as the railway company, and as a body, we can have a good one, and a fair fight, if fight needs be. Miss Smith shall have a taste to begin with. If private people don't tie their dogs up at night, and they worry our sheep, they must pay the damage, otherwise we have a right to take our dogs to worry their cats, etc."

"Father," said David, "Lord Beaconsfield is dead."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Aldridge. "I am very sorry. England has lost her regulator."

"Yes," I said, "he was a great and clever politician. I was in company with a tenant of his a short time since, and I feared from what he told me that Lord Beaconsfield would not survive. At Hughenden Lord Beaconsfield's body was under the care of his butler, who put him to bed regularly and took the greatest care of him. Occasionally he had great trouble with him; for, when unable to move by himself, Lord Beaconsfield would insist on being assisted to his writing-desk to answer important communications, his sense of duty was so great; but he usually submitted pretty patiently to the

sensible dictates of his careful body-guardian. When in London, however, where he ought not to have gone, he would go out, and his butler had not that control over him which would have prolonged his valuable life, and on the last occasion he took a chill coming home, which caused his death."

"Although I admire Lord Beaconsfield," said Mr. Aldridge, "it cannot be said that his powerful influence was often wielded on behalf of the agricultural community. Would it had!"

"Oh no; he had a mind above that. He did not even keep a pig or a cow of his own. A statesman like Lord Beaconsfield could scarcely stoop to favour our part of the community. So long as there was bread and meat for the population, home industry did not bias his impartial

judgment. But when he did speak on the subject, his remarks were concise and to the purpose. With reference to the game question he said, 'Abolish game-keepers.' He kept none himself, and he had no difficulty."

"But, Mr. Hope, don't you think we ought to have protection?"

"I think, sir, that if we do not improve our position until we get protection we shall have to wait a long time for improvement. If the public can get a cheap loaf, do you imagine they care at whose expense it is produced? and we in our turn are equally careless. If we want a new machine, do we care whether it is manufactured at home or in America? If it is a good one and we require it, we buy it. And if we wait until our interest is studied in the House

of Commons, depend upon it we shall have to wait until we send our own representatives. At the present moment all provincial towns in agricultural districts are suffering heavily from agricultural depression, and many of the large trades-people are actually failing in business, who were formerly supported by the farmers and landowners. Others again who supply ready-made articles for the labourers are doing pretty well, as the black coat takes the place of the smock frock, and the hat and feather help to hang the clothes out. Many squires, too, have gone abroad, and the farm steward's wife is the only lady who sails down the market-place in some country towns; but I hope we shall all start again on a firmer basis, more self-reliant, and with more capital on a less acreage."

"But how about those who have not got sufficient capital, Mr. Hope?"

"They must try and get more out of the land, keep books, and curtail home expenditure. Now I was at Great Marlow, in Buckinghamshire, last week, and I took a quiet walk on my own account. I found a farm on the hill, where I spent some time in examining the deplorable picture it presented. The farmer himself was a strong, well-informed man, who was ploughing in a few potatoes. He said he wanted to plant more, but he could not afford to buy them. His horses—six or seven—I saw were nothing but skin and bone. There remained only about two tons of hay in a stump on the whole farm. His carts were all dilapidated; his land as full of couch as possible, and his obligations to his landlord were such that he

did not dare to avail himself of the Hares and Rabbits Bill. Even the turkey-cock had no feathers to his tail, and the only hopeful object that I saw was a flock of ten young geese about two days old. That farmer is in more need of a few seed-potatoes than many of the Irish (who positively sold the seed we despatched to them, and I know a party who bought some at Bristol on its return). He was farming his land in the ordinary way, according to covenants, and such like, in the usual manner of a rack-rented tenant. This, then, was one picture. The other I am about to exhibit, but, as we are now at home, perhaps you will step in and take a glass of ale and a crust of bread-and-cheese. Walking over the fields gives one an appetite."

"Now, Mr. Hope," said my neighbour,

"tell us about your other man of Marlow."

"Yes; the other man is a perfect marvel. I think he commenced life as a general store-dealer and collector of refuse. Now, however, he farms nearly three hundred acres of land, and his weekly expenses for labour average a hundred pounds, whereas the farmer's before mentioned would be about three pounds only. At the present time he is cutting spring cabbage after wheat, and sending it to the London market. His peas are looking well, all early and expensive ones (the seed must have cost him something considerable); and I am told that he gets one crop of corn off every part of his land, and sometimes two other crops. He cannot read or write; nevertheless he has gradually improved his position, and

the poor of Great Marlow regard him as a public benefactor, and truly he hardly ever refuses anyone the chance of earning a shilling. He has an aviary of foreign pheasants, a tame fox, a stable of good horses, and such a sty of fat hogs, worthy of imitation, and he spends all his spare cash in train-loads of London manure."

"One might collect some useful information from such a man," remarked Mr. Aldridge, "and I suppose he would be the very last man to whom the gentlemen who form the Agricultural Commission would go."

"Yes; they would prefer to meet gentlemen-farmers at a first-class hotel—a class who cannot help themselves, and from whom information is valueless."

My wife and daughters, especially Laura, who reads a great deal, were

much aggrieved at the death of Lord Beaconsfield. David offered to drive Mr. Aldridge home with one of the Welsh colts, which the boys have broken in, but that gentleman declined, preferring to walk.

In the evening we had a visitor, Mrs. House, our old monthly nurse, such a healthy, red-faced woman. She had attended the birth of all our children, and therefore we admitted her to our family table, as a matter of course, for she had taken great care of my wife, and was not a little proud of her share in the introduction of our children into the world.

"Very glad to see you all so well, sir," said the good woman, "and as to my four babies, why, I really think I shall live to wait on them in my profession now before

it is over. You must know, sir, I've been up to London, and I am going to call at the Squire's. He is one of my babies, you know."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and I mostly runs over once a year to see him. His mother left me a trifle."

"Did she?"

"Yes, and I heard quite accidentally as you was a-living here, and I says: 'There now! I can't go by the very house, and not call in just to see how they all are.'"

"Very kind of you, Mrs. House. We are always glad to see you."

"Yes, and you've got the same tea, ma'am. Never gets no tea like this nowhere else, and if I had know'd where to get it when I was in London, I sartinly would have treated myself to a pound,

that I would; and I suppose you are very proud of your babies, sir—leastways, I should be if they were mine, bless 'em! And Miss Laura's bin a-playing to me, and Miss Fanny's took me all round to see her ducks and chickens, and the dairy, and I never sin the like on't. And missus has told me all about the ghost and the lion, and I think I shall take her at her word, and stay all night, and go on to the Squire's in the morning."

"Did you enjoy yourself in London?" I inquired of Mrs. House.

"Bless you, yes, sir. I went to stay with my three daughters. They be all married and living up there, and we went somewheres most] nights; but what pleased me most was the 'Lambra. Them music-halls is very good, but nothing up to the 'Lambra. I should have come down yes-

terday, only my daughter was took bad, and I was 'termined to see that new Temple Bar 'Morial afore I come away. There's bin so much fuss about it."

"I should like to see that," said Laura.

"Then," continued Mrs. House, "'tain't worth the 'bus fare, as was eightpence. I was reg'lar took in."

"What is it like, Mrs. House?" asked my wife.

"Like?" said Mrs. House, as she finished her cup of tea. "Why, I can't hardly tell you, but it looks as if it had been cut half in two and the top part set on the ground, and there's two policemen there night and day to guard it; and they must have neglected their duty, for I see all the bottom figures is all smashed in."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Laura. "What do the figures represent?"

"Oh, I can't tell you, miss; but there's a lot of men on horses and a sort of garden arbour on wheels, leastways they are all smashed in now. There's four sides to it with a figure on. There's the Queen on one side, and the chap as made her has put a reg'lar pouting lip to her, as if she didn't like London, or being there at all; and then there's an old man named Formerly on one side, and the head of a foreigner on the other side—leastways I suppose he is a foreigner, for his name is all capital letters and crosses, nine of 'em. Opposite the Queen is the Prince of Wales, and he's got it writ up over his head, 'Stood here,' so I suppose he had to get up there before his model was put in. Then there's a sort of greyhound on the top, with leather wings and thorns all over his tongue and tail. I asked the policeman what sort of animal

'twere, but all we could get out of him was, 'Pass on!' and I was very sorry as I paid one-and-fourpence to go and see such a 'morial as that. Yes, and 'tis stuck bang in the middle of the road, and them figures as is knocked about ain't four feet high, as any drunken feller can hit 'em with a hammer when the p'leece ain't a-looking."

"What a pity! Poor old Temple Bar!" said Laura.

"And so you are going to see the Squire, Mrs. House?" inquired my wife.

"Yes, ma'am. He is one of my babies, you must know, and so was his brother."

"Brother!" I said, with surprise.

"Oh, yes, sir. He had a brother, an older brother, just a year older than himself."

"How long has he been dead, Mrs. House?"

"Nobody knows, sir. They advertised for him when the old gentleman died, but he never answered, so this one took to the 'states."

"How long had he been missing?"

"Ever since he were fifteen years old. He turned out a regular young Tartar, and got expelled from school, and when his father took him to task he took and bolted, and they never heard of him since—leastways to my knowledge, and it fretted his poor mother dreadful, as brought her to a hurley grave."

"How very odd, Lucy," I said, "that we should not have heard of this before."

"It's a dreadful sore subject up at the Squire's, sir. The Squire as is now, and the one what run'd away, was dreadful enemies, and they fought with pistols the day he run'd away; and the Squire was hit in

the head, as they all thought he was dead, and so did his brother when he run'd away."

"What a shocking thing!" observed Fanny. "I don't wonder at the family wishing to keep the matter secret but suppose he should be alive and come home?"

"Why, then, Miss Fanny, he would be grow'd out of all knowledge, and I should be sent for to indemtify him. The last words his poor mother said to me was about a mark on him as I knows of as I could swear to at any time; but I daresay he has got into some fight with some of them foreigners and killed long ago, poor boy. He was his mother's pet, and I've always noticed if there is a child what turns out wild the mother is sure to cling to him. His father read something in the paper just

before he died as he was certain 'twas him as was killed, and if he had lived he was going over to Spain to see into it."

"I am very sorry, indeed, for the Squire," I said, "and I hope nothing amiss will come of it, for all our sakes."

The next day brought us news of Mr. Bull being seriously ill, and David volunteered his services to look after his farm; which were gladly accepted.

Mr. Lionel Aldridge came to assist with David's duties; and really he is improving.

Lord Beaconsfield's funeral was fixed for the Tuesday following, and at the solicitation of a friend I went to see him buried. So far as outward appearance went, everything was quiet, solemn, and respectful; even the pickpockets must have been draped in mourning for the occasion.

High Wycombe is a town of Liberals,

chiefly chairmakers, and Lord Carington leads the van. His lordship was following the Prince of Wales's carriage to Hughenden, which is situate on a hill approached by a steep incline. His lordship's horses were more heavily laden than the Prince's, and, striving to keep up with him, one of the poor things broke its heart and fell dead—food for Lord Carington's bloodhounds. People of all denominations flocked round the churchyard, and the favoured train of followers presented the strangest appearance in contrast with their names and titles—tall and short, stout and thin, old and young, the bald and the long-haired, foreign and English, statesman and farmer, stood round the deep trench, which as it were, undermined the church for the admission of the coffin. There was one old gentleman with a black skull-cap, who

carried an ordinary hat, and appeared to be soliciting alms of the others. The bridal flowers which bedecked the coffin removed the usual awful appearance of the moving corpse; but I was struck with the absence of near and dear relatives of the deceased. Indeed, I understood that only two were present, viz., a brother and a nephew, a lad about thirteen years of age, the inheritor.

After the funeral there was a rush to the church and to the tomb; and when a strong body of London police had commenced the usual "Pass out! Pass out!" the country youths of Hughenden had forgotten the occasion, and were in hot pursuit of a pretty squirrel, which, having lost its late master, was soon doomed to lose its liberty. To look at the little creature jumping from bough to bough of three large beech-trees, its liberty of action appeared secure, and

the chance of the boys catching it small; but, when the boys climbed the trees, it lost its nerve, and, after several marvellous springs, it tried to gain a fourth tree, missed its jump, fell, and was caught by the Hughenden boys to be carried off a prisoner. Many gentlemen and ladies strolled round the late lord's residence, and one I observed sobbing as she contemplated the surroundings of the lovely retreat of the now silent author. She gathered some primroses and violets "in memoriam." A gentleman from Shifnall begged some white stones from the rivulet below, and a tree to plant at Shifnall as a public souvenir, both of which were granted. At the railway-station there was the usual bo-peep at the booking-clerk through a pigeon-hole, and doubtless many pockets were picked in consequence.

One lady lost her purse and her railway-ticket. She had to beg money to get home. A farmer, a very old friend of mine, who had lost his wife only a few days before, was joining the train and had his pocket picked of seventy pounds, the proceeds of the sale of some sheep. I was so sorry for him. Times don't admit of such losses; but, as he says, "one trouble seldom comes alone." I saw no chance of getting a ticket without that horrid squeeze, and so I waited for the next train, and took a stroll into the town, where I noticed the hotel-keepers were driving an excellent trade. On the way home I heard that a Maidenhead tradesman, who had attended the funeral in apparently good health, had died on his way home, and that at present there was no evidence as to the cause of his death;

and this, I think, is all I can tell you about Lord Beaconsfield's funeral, beyond the detailed reports of the daily papers. One word, however, about the police. Surely they know this London division of pick-pockets; then why not send a few intelligent detectives in plain clothes to keep them in order as well as the general public? But no; the police were all "Stand back" and "Pass out," or all apathy and inattention.

END OF VOL I.

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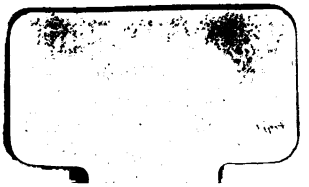
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